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## North Coast News & Views Issue 187

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### 2024/25 Regional Event Fund - Now OPEN!

The Regional Event Fund identifies and supports events in regional NSW that have the potential to act as a 'cornerstone' or flagship tourism event for their area by attracting overnight visitation and delivering long-term benefits to the region.

Applicants are now invited to apply for the 2024/25 Regional Event Fund across three funding streams: [Incubator Event](#), [Flagship Event](#) and [Event Development](#).

To be eligible, events must run between 1 July 2024 and 30 June 2025 and meet the specific eligibility and assessment criteria outlined in the Grant Guidelines for the individual stream.

The Destination North Coast team is available to assist you with further information about the new tourism funding. Once you read the guidelines and confirm your projects' eligibility, please reach out to us.

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### Australian Tourism Awards 2023

Destination North Coast wishes our Australian Tourism Award finalists the very best of luck at the national awards ceremony in Darwin tonight.

Congratulations on the huge effort to get this far and enjoy the celebration with the country's best tourism offerings.

Good luck to our North Coast superstars and [see all finalists here](#).

#### Tourism Restaurants & Catering Services

Potager - A Kitchen Garden, Carool

#### Tourism Marketing & Campaigns

The Tweed (The Tweed Tourism Co.)

#### Caravan & Holiday Parks

Tiona Holiday Park, Forster

#### Excellence in Food Tourism

Love Lord Howe, Lord Howe Island

#### Tourism Wineries, Distilleries & Breweries

Husk Distillers, Tumbulgum

#### Tour & Transport Operators

Vision Walks - Eco Tours, Byron Bay

#### Unique Accommodation

Treehouse Retreat at Diamond Waters,  
Camden Haven

#### Excellence in Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Tourism Experience

Giingan Gumbaynggirr Cultural Experience,  
Gumbaynggirr Country, Coffs Harbour

#### Adventure Tourism

Balloon Aloft Australia in Hunter Valley,  
Camden Valley, Mudgee and Byron Bay

#### New Tourism Business

Contained in Nimbin Accommodation,  
Nimbin

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### DNC Lord Howe Board Meeting & Island Knowledge Sharing

The Destination North Coast Board traditionally rotates around the region for our bi-monthly Board meetings. Next week, for the first time since our organisation's inception in 2017, we have pleasure in planning our meeting to be held on Lord Howe Island.

As part of this visit, the Destination North Coast (DNC) team and Board will be meeting with the Lord Howe Island Tourism Association, the Lord Howe Island Board and with many visitor economy stakeholders.

To maximise this opportunity, we invite visitor economy stakeholders to meet DNC in a Knowledge Sharing Session on the afternoon of Tuesday 19th March. During the session DNC will present key industry intel, insights into the North Coast DMP, how we can support Lord Howe Island and most importantly we want to hear from you regarding how we can assist to improve the visitor experience and the visitor economy on the island.

- What: Knowledge Sharing Session followed by Industry Networking
- When: Tuesday 19th March 2024
- Time: 4.30pm - 6.00pm followed by industry networking (drinks and nibbles provided)
- Where: Lord Howe Island Museum

Ahead of our trip and meetings, and given collaboration is key to our success as an organisation, we ask all visitor economy stakeholders to give us 2 minutes of your time in identifying key themes or questions you'd like answered by Destination North Coast. Please fill in this quick [stakeholder survey](#) to assist us maximise the opportunity of this visit.

**[RSVP to the knowledge sharing and networking event is required by Friday 15 March 2024](#)** and for catering purposes, please include any dietary restrictions.

We look forward to connecting with industry in region and meeting on Lord Howe Island.

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## Destination Australia Conference 2024

Tourism Australia hosted the annual Destination Australia conference this week with the event theme 'The next chapter for sustainable growth', presenting an opportunity for our industry to focus on the future of Australian tourism.

Great information, insights, connections with industry and new and old friends.

Sustainable tourism, accessible and inclusive tourism and strong aviation links are all keys to supporting our industry's continued recovery and growth.



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## Coffs Harbour Airport Welcomes New Qantaslink Airbus A220

Coffs Harbour Airport is set to welcome the new QantasLink Airbus A220 with flights commencing from October.

Coffs Harbour Airport General Manager Frank Mondello said: "Qantas' decision to introduce the new A220 aircraft for services between Coffs Harbour Airport and Melbourne is incredibly exciting for our region.

"It will mean a remarkable 71,000 seats available annually between the two destinations, a significant 20 per cent increase on current capacity. This will undoubtedly have a positive impact on regional tourism and business."

[Find more information here.](#)

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## Rail Trail First Anniversary

More than 140,000 people are estimated to have used the 24 km Tweed section of the Rail Trail since its opening on 1 March 2023 - placing it as one of the most popular visitor attractions on the Northern Rivers.

To mark the first anniversary, Tweed Shire Council has announced its collaboration with Cycling Without Age, a not-for-profit charity that connects the elderly and people with a disability with the outdoors, by offering free rides on trishaw e-bikes, piloted by trained volunteer cyclists.

The partnership will see the establishment of a permanent chapter of Cycling Without Age to operate on the Rail Trail out of Burringbar. Volunteers are now invited to join this initiative, to help bring the joy of Cycling Without Age to the community. [Find more information here.](#)

The highly anticipated Casino to Bentley section of the Northern Rivers Rail Trail is set to open on Saturday 23 March 2024. After the ribbon-cutting ceremony, everyone will be able to enjoy the 13.4 km rail trail, including a bridle trail, which takes in the spectacular countryside leading through the beautiful part of the Richmond Valley. Be among the first to pedal through this scenic stretch, revelling in the beauty of nature and the joy of exploration. [Find more information here.](#)

Lismore is making incredible strides in shaping 16.3 km from Lismore to Bentley that will join up with the Richmond Valley section. This section is under construction with the removal and recycling of railings and sleepers complete, design elements for pause points and rest stops are finalised, and 3 km of the trail surface is now finished.

Once completed, this 16.3 km Lismore stretch will bring the southern end of the Rail Trail to 29.7 km from Casino through to Lismore by the end of 2024! [Find more information here.](#)



## Ballina Byron Gateway Airport Stronger Than Ever

Ballina Byron Gateway Airport's runway has been upgraded to meet future aviation demands.

The \$20.68 million upgrade which opened last week, will support growth for local tourism and businesses as well as provide career opportunities for residents. The Australian Government provided \$5.5 million to this project and the Ballina Shire Council provided the remainder.

From Federal Member for Richmond Justine Elliot:

"As the local MP, I'm proud to have delivered federal funding for this important upgrade to the Ballina Byron Gateway Airport.

"The upgrade will boost economic activity and jobs right across our region.

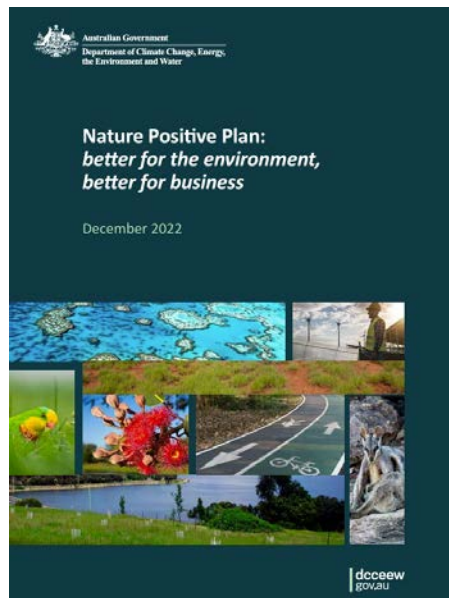
Read [Media Release](#).



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## Australia's New Nature Positive Laws

On 9 May 2023, the Government released its Nature Positive Plan. This outlines its commitments to reform Australia's environmental laws to better protect, restore and manage our unique environment as well as make clearer, faster decisions. The Department of Climate Change, Environment and Water (DCCEEW) is now seeking [feedback on the proposed reforms by 30 March 2024](#).



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## Tourism Australia's Discover Aboriginal Experiences

Tourism Australia's Discover Aboriginal Experiences (DAE) collective consists of quality, authentic, Aboriginal-guided tourism offerings. In 2024 the collective will include 48 members offering more than 200 experiences across a portfolio that covers Australia.

[Find more information here](#).

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## Industry Insights

### Visitor Survey Results

TRA's [NVS snapshot for the month of December 2023](#) is now published. December 2023 saw stronger domestic tourism results when compared to December 2022. Overnight spend, trips and nights away were up.

The [IVS results for December 2023](#) are also available. International visitor spend and nights spent in Australia exceeded pre-COVID levels at 95% and 98% respectively. Trips to Australia were 81% of pre-COVID levels.

#### **Taking Advantage Of The New Monthly TRA Mobility Data**

Since September last year Austrade's Tourism Research Australia team have been [publishing monthly domestic mobility data](#), while they continue to publish data from the National Visitor Survey (NVS). Mobility data measures domestic visitor movement. It is de-identified, aggregated mass movement across geo-locations using pings from mobile phones, Global Positioning System (GPS) and mobile applications (apps).

#### **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](#).

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## **Around The Region**

#### **Coffs Harbour ECO Destination Recertified**

City of Coffs Harbour's reputation as a leader in high value, nature-based discovery tourism has gone next level with its recertification as an ECO Destination.

This prestigious endorsement for the City has been granted by Ecotourism Australia, which has feted Coffs Harbour for its commitment to providing enriching visitor experiences which step lightly on the environment. [Read more here](#).

#### **Bonville Golf Resort**

[Bonville Golf Resort](#) on the Coffs Coast has been welcomed into the Great Golf Courses of Australia (GGCA) collective as a member of the elite Signature Tier. The GGCA is a partnership between Tourism Australia, state tourism bodies and the golf industry, and is designed to showcase the best of Australia's golf offerings to international markets.

#### **Tender Open for Five Headlands Coastal Experience**

Kempsey Shire Council is seeking submissions from appropriately qualified and experienced consultants for the development and delivery of the Five Headlands Coastal Experience Master Plan, Brand and Signage.

Tenders close at 2pm on Tuesday 2 April 2024. [Find more information and submit](#).

#### **Saltwater Freshwater Festival on Dughutti Country**

The Saltwater Freshwater Festival is a much-loved free event packed with music, dance, cultural workshops, yarn tent, Aboriginal arts and crafts stalls, food, and connection to culture and community.

This year's Festival will be held in Smithtown Riverside Park on Dughutti Country.

The Festival is currently calling out for sponsors, volunteers, performers, and stallholders for this deadly day. [Find more information here](#).

#### **Coffs Scores National Youth Touch Football Championships**

Touch Football Australia (TFA) with support from Destination NSW and Coffs Harbour City Council to bring the 2024 DoorDash National Youth Championships (NYC) to C.ex Coffs International Stadium from 25-28 September 2024.

The NYC is Australia's national championship event for junior touch football participants. It attracts more than 7000 attendees and contributes more than \$5 million to the visitor economy. [Find more information here](#).

#### **New Visitor Information Centre Model For Kempsey Shire**

Tourism operators in the Kempsey Shire are set to receive a boost through improved messaging and resources for visitors.

The new Visitor Information Centre Model will ensure more strategic and effective visitor information services and attractions. [Find more information here](#).

#### **Flood Repairs In Northern Rivers National Parks**

NPWS are now approaching the halfway mark in the reconstruction of roads, bridges, walking tracks and campgrounds impacted by the Northern Rivers floods in 2022. The cleanup and recovery has been extensive with nearly 1,000 reports of damage requiring repair. The restored infrastructure is now more resilient and sustainable than ever, aimed at safeguarding against future extreme weather in the area. [Find more information here](#).

#### **Ride The Wave Festival**

The Make A Difference (MAD) charity has begun the countdown to their big Ride the Wave fundraising festival that will be staged at the beautiful Town Beach in Port Macquarie from April 2-6, 2024.

The festival comprises Ride the Wave Surf and Skate Competitions as well as the Ride the Sound Wave live music concerts.

All of the events raise much needed funds for MAD, who support a growing number of families and individuals in need on the Mid North Coast, having served meals to over 5000 adults and 1000 children in 2023. [Find more information here](#).

#### **MidCoast Agritourism Workshop**

- Are you interested in developing an agritourism offering on your farm?
- Want to learn more about agritourism?
- Are you looking to expand your current agritourism business?

[This FREE workshop is for YOU!](#) RSVP Required.

MidCoast Council invites agritourism businesses, graziers and farmers to attend a hands-on learning and networking opportunity at [The Moorings Lakehouse](#), Coomba Bay.

You will learn how to navigate the agritourism journey so you can maximise the opportunities for your business. [Watch this video](#) to hear more about the program and how you can diversify your agriculture

offering.

Attend a two-hour Masterclass, take a tour of and learn from agritourism business, The Moorings Lakehouse

- Date - Tuesday 30 April
- Time - 11am - 2pm (includes workshop, lunch and tour).
- Location - The Moorings Lakehouse, Coomba Bay



## Industry Development And Other Opportunities

### ENTER - 2024 North Coast Tourism Awards!

The 2024 North Coast Tourism Awards are designed to honour growth, innovation, and excellence within our regions tourism sector. Participating in these respected awards offers a valuable opportunity for businesses to reflect on their achievements, strategies, and future visions, fostering growth and sustainability within the industry.

[Find more information and submit your entry for the awards here](#) with submissions closing 3 May 2024.

An Entrant Information Session will be held on Tuesday 26 March 2024. This 'Lunch & Learn' session is designed to help you successfully navigate your way through the 2024 DNC Tourism Awards program:

- get familiar and comfy with the Awards portal
- understand how the online review and consumer score ratings work, and what you can do to improve them
- learn tips and tricks to write an award winning submission
- advice on the support tools available
- answers to your burning questions with a Q&A session.

[Register here.](#)



# NORTH COAST TOURISM AWARDS

NSW  
TOURISM  
INDUSTRY  
COUNCIL



Powered by  
**BUSINESS  
NSW**

### FREE: Business Events Best Practice Sessions

Designed specifically for operators interested in working with Business Events, these sessions are designed to help align vision, expectations and operations for your whole organisation, remove decision making speed humps and empowering teams to operate at optimum levels ensuring the very best profitability and stability for your staff.

Join the DNC Business Events team for your nearest session:

- Coffs Harbour - Monday, 25 March 2024 - C.ex Club, 2-6 Vernon St, Coffs Harbour
- Ballina/Byron - Tuesday, 26 March 2024 - Ballina Surf Club, 65 Lighthouse Pde, East Ballina
- Port Macquarie - Tuesday, 26 March 2024 - The Westport Club, 26 Bullen St, Port Macquarie
- Tweed - Wednesday, 27 March 2024 - Surfing Australia High Performance Centre, 9 Barclay Dr, Casuarina
- Mid North Coast - Wednesday, 27 March 2024 - Forster Visitor Information Centre, 4 Lake St, Forster

All sessions run between 10am - 2pm with lunchtime refreshments included to allow for networking.

### [Registration required.](#)

#### **Creating Wellness Experiences**

Destination NSW recently delivered a Creating Wellness Experiences webinar as part of the [NSW First Program](#), designed to assist visitor economy businesses to develop, promote and sell products and experiences. [A recording of this webinar is now available.](#)

#### **Free Training For Small Business Success**

Want to improve your skills in business planning, finances, record keeping and registration, tax and super management? [Essentials to strengthen your small business](#) is a new free, online learning platform where you can upskill in those critical areas. It includes 21 short, free courses in record keeping, cash flow, deductions, GST, super and more.

#### **Australian Tourism Exchange (ATE)**

[Australian Tourism Exchange \(ATE\)](#) will return to Melbourne this year for the first time since 2015, with Australia's largest annual tourism trade event to be held at the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre (MCEC) 19th May - 23rd May.

#### **Big Business Marketing Strategies for Small Businesses Webinar**

This is a FREE webinar where digital strategist and co-founder of Navii and Tourism Tribe, Liz Ward, will show you how small business operators can use low-cost tools to support the growth of their businesses. [Register for the webinar on 20th March 2024.](#)

#### **Hiring Outside the Box Webinar**

On 27 March the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations will be hosting a webinar on facilitating an [inclusive workplace for neurodivergent talent](#). Industry experts and employers will share practical strategies to attract and retain neurodivergent staff, and the benefits of broadening the talent pool.

#### **Earlybird Registrations Open for Accessible & Inclusive Tourism Conference**

[This event](#) will take place at Melbourne's Convention and Exhibition Centre on 27 August 2024.

#### **Locay - Boutique Accommodation Platform**

New online platform [Locay](#) is setting out to transform how travellers seek out boutique hotels. Crafted for connoisseurs of culture and comfort, Locay is a modern travel resource which shines the spotlight on a uniquely new style of travel by unveiling design-savvy accommodation concepts, local hotel recommendations, neighbourhood guides, and insider tips to help users discover the perfect vacation. Locay seeks to catalogue unique accommodation solutions that focus on location, experience potential and concept. Using the platform, travellers can book and compare major online travel brands to secure the best deals by accessing global inventory, giving travellers the opportunity to select their preferred booking terms, platform, and payment options.

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## Funding And Other Opportunities

Funding through grant programs can provide significant benefits to businesses and destinations, helping to drive economic growth, create jobs, and improve the visitor experience. Before commencing a grant application, please visit our [Funding and Grants](#) page for information and tips to support your application and a [link to request a Letter of Support from Destination North Coast](#).

#### **2024 Qantas Regional Grants Program**

As part of a \$10 million commitment over five years, the [2024 Qantas Regional Grants Program](#) will provide another \$2 million in grants this year to support Australian-based not-for-profit community groups and projects that benefit regional areas. Grants will include a combination of cash, marketing support and flights according to the specific needs of each group.

[Community groups and organisations can apply now](#). Open until 10 May 2024 with successful recipients to be announced in July 2024.

#### **EV Charging Grants for Regional NSW**

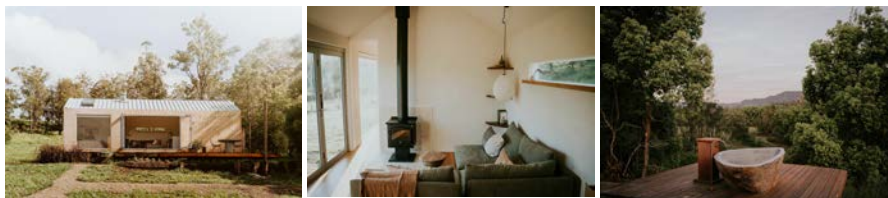
Applications are open for small to medium regional visitor economy businesses and councils to install EV charging infrastructure via the [NSW Government's Destination Charging Program](#). Successful applicants will receive 75 per cent of the cost of purchasing and installing up to four charge points at each site. Open until 3rd May 2024.

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## North Coast Product Development

#### **Arcadia Nimbin**

A boutique bush retreat situated on a 250-acre family farm in colourful Nimbin. Arcadia's first off-grid cabin has launched in early 2024, featuring an incredible view of the Nimbin rocks and a raw granite bathtub overlooking the valley beyond. Tucked into a leafy back paddock above the river, the cabin is designed to be a private sanctuary for rest and reconnection.



#### **Byron Yoga Centre**

Byron Yoga Centre has created the perfect daytime activity to nourish body and mind - rain, hail or shine. Their day retreats encompass the true ethos of Byron Bay: wellness, sustainability and peace.

#### **Neon Mango Diner and Bar - Lennox Head**

New Pan Asian diner and Bar open for breakfast, lunch and dinner.

### [Beach Life Crescent Head](#)

High end beach accessories and clothing retail shop located in the heart of the village of Crescent Head.

### [Esme Bar and Kitchen - Coffs Harbour](#)

A haven on the Coffs Harbour Jetty - where food is designed to be shared, drinks are always flowing and the community comes together.

### [Myall Street Studio - Tea Gardens](#)

Creative studio at Tea Gardens offering pottery lessons, kids and teens holiday clay camps, wine & clay nights, pottery supplies plus other artform workshops for painting, macramé and jewellery making

### [Wallis Lake Oyster Tours](#)

An immersive experience wading through oyster leases, finished off with harvesting and shucking oysters from the very waters visitors are standing in.

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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 DNSW's website](#).

### [Maclean Highland Gathering](#)

29-30 March 2024  
Maclean

### [2024 Australian Women's Classic](#)

5-7 April 2024  
Bonville

### [New Italy Anniversary Day](#)

7 April 2024  
New Italy

### [Dream On Arts, Music and Culture Festival](#)

21 April 2024  
Corindi Beach

### [Grafton to Inverell Cycle Classic](#)

27 April 2024  
Grafton

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## Stay Up To Date And Follow DNC On Social Media

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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