



North Coast News & Views Issue 189

Bellingen Shire Achieves Prestigious ECO Destination Certification

The Bellingen Shire has received recognition for its commitment to global sustainability standards announcing they have been awarded Ecotourism Australia's prestigious [ECO Destination Certification](#).

The region joins an elite cohort of eight Australian destinations dedicated to sustainable tourism and is the fourth in New South Wales to achieve this significant feat. Through Ecotourism Australia's certification partner Green Destinations, Bellingen Shire is also recognised in a global network of more than 200 leading sustainable destinations.

The Certification application was led by the Bellingen Shire Council with collaboration and support from a variety of stakeholders including Gumbaynggirr representatives, National Parks and Forestry, business chambers and the local community throughout the application process.

The ECO Destination Certification supports nature-based tourism destinations to improve their holistic sustainability planning and development against the four pillars of sustainability: environmental, socio-economic, cultural and sustainable management, as well as encourage local business engagement in ecotourism and sustainability. 11 Bellingen Shire tourism businesses are currently undergoing the precertification benchmarking program [Strive 4 Sustainability Scorecard](#) to measure and improve their current sustainability practices.

[Discover Australia's latest ECO Destination, Bellingen Shire.](#)

Bellingen Shire's ECO Destination Certification was announced yesterday with Destination North Coast pleased to be one of the many attending and celebrating this achievement for the region



NORTH COAST TOURISM AWARDS

North Coast Tourism Awards - 3 Weeks To Close

With just three weeks to get your [North Coast Tourism Awards](#) submission in, we thought we'd speak to the 'WHY' of entering the Awards.

Here's some good business reasons from Business NSW, our delivery partner for this year's Tourism Awards:

- Be recognised by peers and raise your reputation.
- Benchmark against your competitors.
- Review your business goals and achievements over the past 12 months.
- Use your success as a marketing advantage.
- Strengthen staff morale and team spirit.
- Receive feedback from industry experts.

Margret Meagher, Founder Hello Koalas Sculpture Trail had this to say about her Tourism Awards journey.

'Awards submissions have been an integral part of the Hello Koalas Sculpture Trail's business planning starting with the North Coast Tourism Awards in 2015 when we won Gold for 'New Business'. This led to

us achieving bronze at the NSW State Tourism Awards. We were hooked!

With the confidence and motivation to enter subsequent awards, we found the process for writing an awards submission invaluable in planning and evaluating the path we would take over the following years. It's been a game changer for us and many of our friends and colleagues in the tourism sector. Importantly, it's energising and inspiring to work towards the vision for your tourism business, with guidance, support and mentoring from awards organisers who want you to win too!

We salute Destination North Coast and Business NSW for providing the opportunities to embark and continue on this exciting journey.'

The not-to-be-missed North Coast Tourism Awards and Gala Dinner to be held in Port Macquarie, 1 August 2024, is sure to be a fun and celebratory evening shared with industry peers and friends.

Reflections Holidays Launches Fish Sustainability Program With Ozfish

Reflections Holidays - the largest holiday park and adventure camping group in NSW and the only one in Australia that is a certified social enterprise - has partnered with OzFish to help recreational anglers and communities improve the health of their rivers, lakes and estuaries.

Reflections will open its parks to 'voluntourism' and invite OzFish to run programs to restore local fish habitats, remove rubbish from waterways and educate the next generation on being a sustainable angler.

[Read media release.](#)

Live Music Venues Soar In NSW

The number of venues hosting live performances has soared by 84 per cent since March 2023, when the NSW Government made it easier for venues to host live music. Since then, 112 pubs, clubs and other live venues have joined the list of establishments that qualify for two hours extended trading in return for staging live music and backing local musicians. The NSW Government's Vibrancy Reforms have doubled the incentives for extended trading hours to host live music and will prevent single noise complainants from shutting down venues. There are now 245 licensed venues claiming live music incentives from Liquor & Gaming NSW.

[Read media release.](#)

Industry Insights

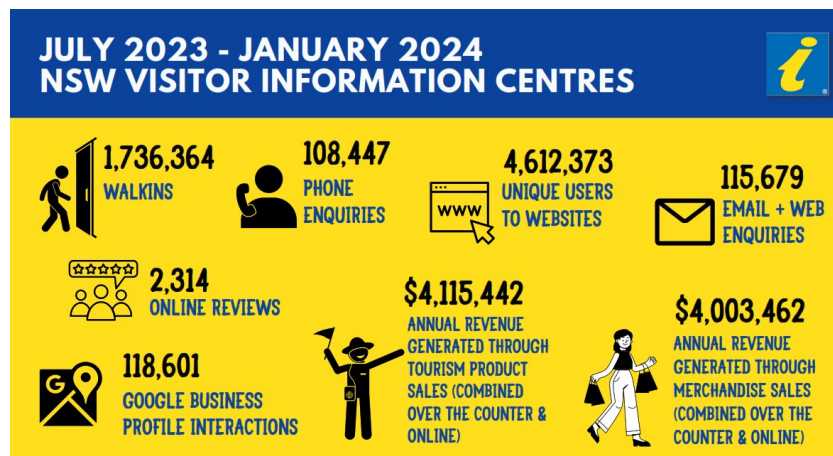
Caravanning Thrives

Australia's caravan industry continues to flourish, with the number of overnight caravan and camping trips in 2023 up 9% on pre-COVID 2019 levels. The data, revealed in the **Caravan Industry Association of Australia's** new [National Visitor Economy Report](#), shows Aussies embarked on 15.2 million caravan and camping holidays for the 12 months ending Dec 2023. The industry's growth comes despite a downward trend in its main market, which is seeing a rising number of Baby Boomers favour overseas travel.

The 30-54-year-old (or "family package") demographic is picking up the momentum, however, with more and more choosing to hit the roads and explore their own backyard. The caravan and camping sector plays a key role in Australia's visitor economy, with the cohort spending more than \$8.1 billion while travelling.

AVIC Latest Statistics

The latest statistics for Visitor Centres in NSW have been released - see the infographic provided by The Tourism Group below.



New Data To Boost Business Events

Tourism Research Australia (TRA) is publishing detailed [business events data](#) as part of its official statistics, following new questions being added to the National Visitor Survey (NVS) and International Visitor Survey (IVS).

In 2023, TRA reported visitors travelling for business events spent \$20.9 billion in Australia during their trip. International visitors spent \$2.6 billion, domestic overnight spend was \$16.9 billion and domestic daytrip spend was \$1.4 billion. The new TRA measurements are designed to help visitor economy stakeholders better understand the business events sector and assist with industry planning.

Around The Region

Morandi And New Olley Works Join Monet

Artwork by renowned Italian still life painter Giorgio Morandi and Margaret Olley now hang alongside renowned French Impressionist Claude Monet at the Tweed Regional Gallery, as part of the National Gallery of Australia's Sharing the National Collection initiative.

The new artworks will be on display in Murwillumbah until October 2025, signalling the final phase of the National Gallery initiative in the Tweed. [Find more information here.](#)

GUULABAA - Place of Koala, Cowarra State Forest

Guulabaa - Place of Koala in Cowarra State Forest is a new, world-first, nature-based tourism precinct where people, koalas, forest, culture, adventure come together. Where 'caring for country' underpins everything.

[The new website](#) precedes the official opening of this soon to be major regional attraction although two of the collaborating partner products are open. Check out [WildNets](#) and [The Big Koala](#) both of which are receiving many visitors.

Vision For Coffs Jetty Precinct Takes Shape:

The masterplan will create a self-sustaining, cost-neutral precinct that will reinvest all proceeds into improving the foreshore's public areas. [Learn more here.](#)

Bonville Golf Resort Joins Great Golf Courses Of Australia

Coffs Coast golfing icon, [Bonville Golf Resort](#) has joined [Great Golf Courses of Australia](#) (GGCA) as a member of the collective's elite Signature Tier. Voted 'Australia's Favourite Golf Course' seven years in a row by Golf Australia Magazine, the property has long been a beloved destination for golfers.

Bonville is also featured in Tourism Australia's just released [April Hot List!](#)

Coffs Long Lunch

If you're a food lover don't miss this foodie event on 18 May 2024. Indulge in great food, great vibes, plus laughs and learnings from local guest speakers. Discover the heart of regional Coffs Coast food by the people making it happen. [Book here.](#)

Harvest Food Trail 2024

Northern Rivers Food's [Harvest Food Trail](#) is on again in 2024 and it's going to be bigger and better than ever with an 'Emerging Stars Hub', 'Taste the Harvest' dining events as well as the popular Food Trail where it's encouraged to visit a working farm, distillery or food producer.

This year it will be held **4-5 May 2024** to also take advantage of the long weekend in Queensland.



Understory In Lismore Rainforest Botanic Garden.

Understory is a magical, interactive theatre adventure created for children by Roundabout Theatre, springing to life in the Lismore Rainforest Botanic Gardens this April school holidays from 16-28 April 2024. Part theatre, part quest and part wacky science field trip, *Understory* is made to inspire children aged 7-11 years with a deep curiosity, wonder and connection to the natural world. The entire Hoop Pine Forest at Lismore Rainforest Botanic Gardens will become an enchanting theatrical world brought to life by an original story that is both fantastical and based in science and ecology principles. [Find more information here.](#)

New Local Design-Led Hybrid Hotel Brand To Launch In Byron Bay

Local accommodation operator Leisure Accommodation Collective will launch [Drifter](#), a new design-led hybrid hotel brand in Byron Bay later this year. Drifter is positioned as a lifestyle brand targeting free-spirited travellers both young and young at heart. Offering an innovative design and design-centric aesthetic, the Drifter properties will house diverse rooms ranging from superior private suites to premium shared bunk rooms, workspaces, buzzing bars, dining areas, wellbeing studios, and a rotating roster of social and cultural events. Opening in the heart of Byron Bay on Lateen Lane, the Byron Bay property will feature 52 rooms.

New Exhibition At Slim Dusty Centre

The [JADA exhibition](#) showcasing a stunning collection of unique and original contemporary fine art drawings from 56 of Australia's leading artists arrives at the Nulla Nulla Gallery from 3 April to 26 May 2024. These pieces have been carefully selected to ignite the imagination, stir emotions, and inspire conversations among viewers of all ages. The Gallery will be launching the JADA Exhibition on Saturday 13 April from 11am - 12.30pm with a special event at the Slim Dusty Centre.

Holistic Eye Fitness Retreat - Seeland, Clarence Valley

The Australian-first [Holistic Eye Fitness Retreat](#) offers a variety of activities and treatments to help guests relax, unwind and improve their eye health and vision. 9-12 May 2024.

Nimbin MardiGrass

The [Nimbin MardiGrass](#) is an annual rally and celebration in the village of Nimbin. Beginning in 1993, MardiGrass is held to protest the drug laws, educate people on the various uses of cannabis (medicinal, industrial, recreational and spiritual) and celebrate the culture that has grown in Nimbin over the years. Find information about the new Ubud-Duber Rideshare Services for transfers to Nimbin from Ballina, Byron, Casino, Kyogle, Murwillumbah, Lismore and the Gold Coast. 3-5 May 2024.

New Beach Mobility Aids

Kempsey Council and the Macleay Disability Inclusion Group are pleased to announce the trial of a new beach mobility aid service, designed to enhance beach access for people with limited mobility. The beach mobility aids are available for free day hire at Horseshoe Bay, Hat Head and Crescent Head Holiday Parks. [Find more information here.](#)

Industry Development And Other Opportunities

The new-look Destination NSW corporate website features a [handy guide to creating and upscaling agritourism experiences](#) to assist visitor economy businesses interested in exploring or growing their presence in the sector.

Destination NSW's agritourism resources are designed to help primary producers develop practical and bookable experiences that meet and exceed the expectations of visitors by connecting them to authentic farming practices in a unique and memorable way.

Quick Tips for Creating Wellness Experiences

While wellness travel is commonly associated with spas, health resorts, and yoga retreats, providers of accommodation, attractions, tours, and activities in NSW have the opportunity to integrate wellness elements into their visitor experiences as well.

Explore how your business can incorporate wellness into your experience through the latest release of the [Quick Tips for Creating Wellness Experiences](#).

The Quick Tips for Creating Wellness Experiences provides practical tips and advice including:

- Understanding the wellness visitor
- How to incorporate wellness elements into your experience
- Next steps on how to share your wellness experience offering.

The [Quick Tips](#) and [on-demand webinar](#) delivered by Destination NSW in collaboration with Droga & Co., are part of the [NSW First Program](#) to assist visitor economy businesses to develop, promote and sell products and experiences.



Calling All North Coast Transport Operators

Ranked one of the top 25 travel websites in the world, [Rome2Rio](#) is a global transport website that allows users to quickly find their way from A to B using any combination of transport. With over 28 million users a month, Rome2Rio is one of the world's most popular travel resources. It is free to list your transport company on Rome2Rio and reach the millions of travel planners who use the site to discover, plan and book their trip.

If you are a transport operator that isn't currently listed on the site, you're invited to [submit your details](#) to get set up. There is no charge for this and sites like this give international travellers particularly, the confidence to disperse from capital cities to regional Australia.

New Product Workshop

Several North Coast operators attended the recent Destination NSW 2024 New Product Workshop. This full day, appointment-based business to business trade event in Sydney presented an opportunity for newly export-ready NSW product suppliers to meet face-to-face with key distributors including Inbound Tour Operators (ITOs) and Online Travel Agents (OTAs). These operators are all now be well-prepared to welcome international travellers.



Sustainability webinars for tourism operators

After the release of the free national [Sustainable Tourism Toolkit](#) for businesses, tourism operators are encouraged to register for free webinars to learn how to operate your tourism enterprise in a more sustainable way. This four-part series will offer practical guidance and inspiration across the different aspects of sustainable tourism.

The webinars will be held on:

- Tuesday 30 April 2024, 12:00 pm - 1:00 pm - Webinar 1: Managing your business in a sustainable way
- Thursday 2 May 2024, 12:00 pm - 1:00 pm - Webinar 2: Environment and climate action
- Thursday 9 May 2024, 12:00 pm - 1:00 pm - Webinar 3: Respecting culture
- Wednesday 15 May 2024, 12:00 pm - 1:00 pm - Webinar 4: Creating positive social impact and promoting your sustainability story.

[Register now.](#)

Save The Date - Destination Australia 2025

Destination Australia 2025 will be held on 19 March 2025 in Sydney. Watch a recap video of Destination Australia 2024 [here](#).

Australian Indigenous Tourism Conference

The 2024 [Australian Indigenous Tourism Conference](#) will be held in Melbourne from 29-31 October. The conference provides Aboriginal tourism businesses with an opportunity to forge new partnerships with wholesale and retail operators, including airlines, accommodation and media, while showcasing their product through a globally recognised forum. It will include workshops and education

sessions.

Online Accessibility Webinar

Join Tourism Tribe for a [free webinar](#) on Thursday 9 May from 11am to explore accessibility must-haves for your website and social media accounts.

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](#).

EV Charging Grants Extended

The NSW Government is investing \$20 million to support the growth of the NSW visitor economy by catering for an increasing number of electric vehicle (EV) drivers. It is providing grants to assist regional NSW businesses and councils to purchase and install EV chargers. The closing date for round two applications has been extended to **2 August 2024**.

Made In NSW

Screen NSW's Made in NSW Program is a five-year funding program to support the advancement of NSW as a production destination for feature films and major television drama programs. **Ongoing**.

North Coast Product Development

Vedic Vegetarian - Nimbin

Recently opening on the main street in Nimbin, Vedic Vegetarian offers delicious ready to go vegetarian and vegan meals. All meals are made in house daily with fresh local ingredients and include a range of curries, salads and refreshing treats. Open for lunch and dinner (except Tuesdays).

Serene Day Spa - Diamond Beach

Massage, relaxation and beauty treatments within Serenity Resort at Diamond Beach.

The Coastal Brewing Co. Brews Up New Beers

The [Coastal Brewing Company](#), the MidCoast's only craft brewery, has recently launched their Dalman Street range of non-alcoholic beers. And three new English-style beers, each with their own taste characteristics and named after islands in Wallis Lake: Snake Island Brown Ale, Club Island Dark Mild and Long Island Summer Ale.



Meanwhile at the recent Royal Queensland Beer Awards, two of their popular beers took home medals; Gold for Stony Point West Coast IPA and Silver for Hearts Point New England Hazy Pale Ale.

Ebike, Picnic Gear & Grazing Box - Mooball

Pedals and Picnics latest offering for everything needed for a full filled day enjoying the Northern Rivers Rail Trail.

Motel Maclean

The newly renovated and updated Motel Maclean is a hidden gem situated a few minutes' drive off the Pacific Motorway and Big River Way with views of the river and is very convenient with superior comfort.

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](#).

Nimbin Art Fair

Nimbin

29 March - 21 April 2024

Murwillumbah Arts Trail

Murwillumbah

11-12 May 2024

Caper Food and Culture Festival

Byron Bay

17-26 May 2024

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](#).
