



Destination
North Coast NSW

Visitor Economy News



North Coast Regional Tourism Awards Now Open

The North Coast Regional Tourism Awards are officially open for nominations!

In partnership with the NSW Tourism Association, this prestigious program provides a seamless pathway to the NSW Tourism Awards, with winners advancing to the Australian Tourism Awards in 2026.

Why Enter?

- Gain industry recognition & media exposure
- Elevate your business with expert feedback
- Access an unprecedented Entrant Support Program - including weekly webinars, judge Q&As & draft reviews

Key Dates:

- Nominations Open: 10 March
- Submissions Due: 9 May
- Gala Event: 31 July at Elements at Byron

If you're a North Coast tourism operator striving for excellence, growth, and industry best practice, this is your chance!

[Find More Here](#)



North Coast Well Represented at National Tourism Awards

Congratulations to our North Coast finalists, heading to the National Awards in Adelaide on 21 March 2025. The region is well represented this year with eight finalists across a wide array of categories. On behalf of DNC and the wider North Coast, visitor economy we wish you the best of luck for the finals.

Major Attractions: Northern Rivers Rail Trail

Major Festivals & Events: Bluefest Byron Bay

Tourism Restaurants & Catering Services:
Potager

Adventure Tourism: Balloon Aloft

Tourism Marketing & Campaigns: Tweed
Tourism Company

Cultural Tourism: Port Macquarie Museum

Excellence in Food Tourism: Love Lord Howe

Excellence in Accessible Tourism: Balloon
Aloft

[Find More Here](#)



Tropical Cyclone Alfred Community Recovery Support Fund

Activated councils will have up to \$1 million in funding made available once impacts are known. This will provide proactive support for communities to undertake essential immediate clean up and restoration activities for important community assets.

Other cyclone recovery assistance grants [can be found here.](#)

Find More Here



CCIA Partners with DNSW on New Campaign

Caravan & Camping Industry Australia (CCIA NSW) is partnering again with Destination NSW to bring back the hugely successful FEEL MORE. LIVE MORE. campaign to drive more visitors to holiday in NSW.

This 4-week campaign launched Monday, 3 March 2025 spanning TV, including app streamed TV, social and digital media across all of NSW, ACT, Regional VIC and Southern QLD including the Gold Coast.

The initiative follows NSW holiday parks celebrating a record average occupancy rate of 81 per cent during the New Year week commencing 30 December 2024, the highest rate for the period in four years.

[Find More Here](#)

Wotif's 2025 Aussie Town of the Year Top 10

Each year, Wotif gathers intel from travel-savvy Aussies to spotlight [trending towns on the rise](#). The 2025 winners have been revealed, and we are delighted to advise that Kingscliff came in at eight spot and the good times did not stop there with Yamba securing the ninth spot on the list.



2025 Restaurant & Catering Awards

The 2025 Hostplus Awards for Excellence are now open, recognising outstanding achievements in Australia's hospitality industry. Hosted by the Restaurant & Catering Association (R&CA), the awards celebrate excellence in dining, catering, and service.

The awards are open to both members and non-members, with judging commencing after entry submission. Finalists will be announced six weeks before their state's gala event.

Eligibility, fees, and nomination details [can be found here](#).



SEPP Agritourism Updates

The agritourism provisions in the State Environmental Planning Policy (Exempt and Complying Codes) 2008 (Codes SEPP) have been updated. These changes are part of our ongoing commitment to improve the planning system.

The changes are designed to make it easier to understand the rules around running farm experiences, farm gate business and farm stays alongside farming operations.

[Find More Here](#)

Industry Insights



Tourism Investment Monitor 2023-24

Tourism Research Australia's (TRA) latest report outlines the tourism investment pipeline for 2023-24, providing an annual update on investment in fixed assets related to Australia's visitor economy. The 2023-24 tourism investment pipeline consisted of 346 projects with a value of \$63.4 billion, an increase of 39 projects and \$7.3 billion on 2022-23.

In 2023-24, investment in:

- aviation increased by \$4.2 billion relative to 2022-23;



Review of Australian Adventure Activity Standards Commences

The Outdoor Council of Australia (OCA) is pleased to announce the appointment of Dr. David Marsden as the Project Lead for the review of the Australian Adventure Activity Standards (AAAS) and Good Practice Guides (GPG). With the commencement of this contract marks the start of the review period to ensure that the industry guidelines are keeping up with expected practice in the outdoor industry.

- arts, recreation, and business services increased by \$3.8 billion relative to 2022-23; and
- accommodation has declined by \$0.7 billion relative to 2022-23.

The project is expected to be completed by June 2026, with the revised standards set to provide a strong foundation for the future of adventure-based activities in Australia.

[Find Out More](#)

[Find Out More](#)

Travel giants are in good shape

Booking.com is seeing positive developments as international tourism returns to pre-COVID levels. In 2024, its parent company, Booking Holdings, is projected to achieve a turnover of \$166 billion, reflecting a 10% increase compared to 2023. Meanwhile, Booking.com itself expects a revenue increase of 11%, bringing its total to \$23.7 billion. [Find more information here.](#)

Industry Development



LGNSW Destination, Visitor & Economy Conference Mantra at Salt Beach, Kingscliff NSW 26th - 28th May

The LGNSW Destination, Visitor & Economy Conference will provide a platform for likeminded professionals to come together and learn from experts and peers in the industry and will equip delegates with the tools, knowledge, and insights to nurture and unlock the full potential of their councils for sustainable visitor economy growth and prosperity.

[Register Here](#)

Australian Festival Industry Conference - 8-9 September 2025

The first round of speakers for AFIC 2025 has been announced. Each speaker represents a vital pocket of the industry, ranging from festival direction, to event marketing, to volunteer management, ticketing and much more.

[Find more information here.](#)



Boost Your Bookings Today with ATDW

Adding a deal or special offer to your Tourism Business Profile is a powerful way to boost your online visibility and your bookings. Whether it's a discount, a special package, or a money-can't-buy offer, your deals will help you get the attention of customers seeking extra value. Boost your visibility and attract more bookings.

Log in to the ATDW platform today to add a deal to make your experience the top choice for travellers.

[Find Out More](#)

Go behind the numbers with new TRA webinars

On 14 March, Tourism Research Australia (TRA) will discuss its new [Domestic Tourism Statistics](#) (DoTS) collection method for domestic and outbound travel, which replaced the National Visitor Survey from 1 January 2025.

[Register here.](#)

Around the Region

Discover what's been happening across the tourism industry within the Destination North Coast network. To share your new product, experience or event, please [get in touch with Ashley Gray](#), our Industry Development Manager.



One-of-a-kind dining experience at Pipit
Award-winning modern Australian restaurant located in Pottsville, has launched a new VIP Luxury Package, offering a dining experience like no other.

Designed for a small group of six at its open-plan kitchen counters, this intimate and interactive private chef experience showcases the very best of Pipit's award-winning dining and wines whilst pairing it with unique print art. With artistry on the plate and on paper, chef Ben Devlin creates limited-edition Gyotaku art works.

[Find Out More](#)



NSW Wins At Green Destinations Awards
NSW has triumphed at the Green Destinations Top 100 Story Awards, which recognise destinations working towards more responsible tourism development.

Congratulations to Barrington Coast who earned 2nd place in the category 'Destination Management' in recognition of successful and inclusive destination development or regeneration, visitor management and crisis recovery.

[Find Out More](#)

Wellness Tourism Summit - June 2025 Byron Bay

The [Wellness Tourism Summit](#) is back in 2025 with a special NSW discount for all NSW attendees until March 30. (Code **NSW2025**).

This is an opportunity to connect with key players in the wellness industry, explore emerging trends, and gain valuable insights to support the future of your business.

EOI for Harvest Festival Now Open

Expressions of Interest (EOIs) are NOW OPEN for the 2025 Northern Rivers Food Harvest Festival™. Showcasing a new month-long format from 1-31 May, the festival is shining the spotlight on a different sub-region of the Northern Rivers each weekend - giving its farmers, producers and restaurants all a chance to shine. [Find more information here.](#)

Funding and Other Opportunities

Government agencies and organisations offer grants and funding programs, designed to assist with improving your business or product offering. Review the latest opportunities for [grants in NSW](#) and [nationally via Austrade](#).

Destination North Coast may be able to provide a Letter of Support (LOS) for your project if it aligns with the [Destination North Coast Destination Management Plan \(DMP\)](#). Letters of Support requests can be made [via the online form](#) found on our website.

[Electric Vehicle Destination Charging Grant - Round 3](#)

The third funding round will co-fund private EV charge point operators (CPOs) who can install, own and operate low powered direct current (DC) public EV chargers between 24kW to 100kW in eligible zones across regional NSW. This round will fund up to 80% of costs associated with EV charger installations, up to a maximum of \$200,000 per site. **Closes 28 March 2025.**

[Qantas Regional Grants](#)

The Qantas Regional Grants program is back, offering \$2 million in support to Australian-based communities and projects that are looking to benefit our country's regional areas. The Qantas Regional Grants program offered recipients a combination of cash grants, flights (in kind) and marketing support. **Closes 10 May 2025.**

Sustainability and Eco-tourism



EV Financial Incentives

Switching to electric vehicles (EVs) can cut running costs by 70% and reduce maintenance expenses by 40%. Businesses with a fleet of at least three vehicles may be eligible for \$5,000 towards an EV passenger vehicle and up to \$20,000 per EV truck. Additional support is available for charging infrastructure, with funding between \$4,000 and \$8,000 for the supply and installation of smart chargers at business premises.

[Find More Here](#)

Free Decarbonisation Toolkit

The UQ Business School has released a [free decarbonisation toolkit](#) to help tourism destinations reduce their carbon footprint. Designed for destination managers and marketers, it provides practical strategies to support climate mitigation, outlining nine key decarbonisation factors that influence tourism emissions.

New QTF Sustainability Module

Via the Quality Tourism Framework (QTF), Australia's trusted tourism accreditation program, operators now have access to a new [tourism emissions reduction accreditation module](#), helping businesses take practical steps toward sustainability and environmental responsibility.

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](#).

[ThrillFest](#) - Lennox Head 11 April 2025

[Clarence Cane Growers 100 Years Celebration](#) - Maclean 12 April 2025

[River Youth Festival](#) - Bellingen 12 April 2025

[Conflicts and Creativity](#) - Port Macquarie Museum until 31 May 2025

[Proppanow - Occurrent Affair](#) - Lismore Regional Gallery until 27 April 2025

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](#). You can find training and other content on our [YouTube channel](#). We also encourage you to share our updates with your networks, simply forward this email and they can [subscribe here](#).

