

Shoalhaven Economic Growth & Advocacy Group

Meeting Date: Wednesday, 31 July, 2024
Location: Jervis Bay Rooms, City Administrative Centre, Bridge Road, Nowra
Time: 4.00pm

Please note: Council's Code of Meeting Practice permits the electronic recording and broadcast of the proceedings of meetings of the Council which are open to the public. Your attendance at this meeting is taken as consent to the possibility that your image and/or voice may be recorded and broadcast to the public.

Agenda

1. **Meeting Conduct Statement**
2. **Acknowledgement of Country**
3. **Apologies**
4. **Confirmation of Minutes**
 - Shoalhaven Economic Growth & Advocacy Group - 27 May 2024..... 1
5. **Declaration of Interests**
6. **Reports**
 - EG24.12 Advocacy and Growth - Staff Update 3
 - EG24.13 Framework for Strategic Plan - Economic Development & Tourism
2025 - 2030..... 12
 - EG24.14 Economic Development & Tourism - Marketing Activity Stakeholder
Engagement Plan - Financial Year 2024 / 25 15
7. **General Business**

Membership

Mayor

All Councillors - maximum of 3 voting (1 from each ward) to be determined at each meeting

Ms Anna Finch – Human Resources

Ms Brenda Sambrook – Tourism

Ms Holly Pastor – Education

Mr Iain Chalmers – Human Resources and Small Business

Mr John Lamont – Manufacturing

Ms Kaye Morris – Education –

Ms Michelle Bishop – Tourism

Mr Robert Crow – Tourism

Ms Sandra Gray – Small Business Operator

Quorum: Half + 1

Note: Any non-voting Councillor in attendance at any of the above Committees may act as an alternate voting member in circumstances where achievement of a quorum is required, noting that this doesn't apply when quorum specifies the quorum to require community member attendance.

Role and Purpose

- Inform the development, implementation, and review of council economic growth strategies
- Providing advice and make recommendations to Council on matters relating to business and economic growth in the Shoalhaven.
- Provide advice and recommendations on key advocacy opportunities to support business growth in the region

Delegated Authorities

- Make recommendations on actions and priorities
- Provide feedback on economic growth key issues or growth opportunities
- Appoint suitable representatives to fill casual vacancies
- Research contemporary methodologies to achieve advocacy, business growth and economic development.
- Inform and recommend policy for business growth
- Partner and liaise with other Council Advisory Groups on key issues as required

MINUTES OF THE SHOALHAVEN ECONOMIC GROWTH & ADVOCACY GROUP

Meeting Date: Monday, 27 May 2024
Location: Orchid & Osprey Training Rooms, City Admin Centre, Bridge Road, Nowra
Time: 4.00pm

The following members were present:

Mr Robert Crow - Tourism - Chairperson
Clr Matthew Norris - Voting Councillor Ward 1 (Remotely)
Clr Patricia White - Voting Councillor Ward 3
Clr Gillian Boyd - Alternate Ward 3 (Remotely)
Ms Brenda Sambrook - Small Business Operator (Remotely)
Ms Holly Pastor – Education (Remotely)
Ms Sandra Gray - Small Business Operator (Remotely)

Others present:

Mr Paul Mitchell – Representative for Member of Gilmore (Remotely)
Mr Lou Matthews – Service NSW (Remotely)
Ms Natalie Harker – Kangaroo Valley Chamber of Tourism & Commerce (Remotely)
Mr Matt Dell - Milton/Ulladulla Business Chamber (Remotely)
Mr Trent Hilaire - Shoalhaven Professional Business Association (Remotely)
Ms Selena Steven - Regional Development Australia (Remotely)
Mr Robbie Dalton – Localis Data Company (Remotely)
Mr Elliott Taylor - Localis Data Company (Remotely)
Ms Robyn Stevens – Chief Executive Officer
Ms Coralie McCarthy – Acting Director City Futures
Mr Ryan Schulter - Senior Economic Development Officer
Ms Kristy Mayhew - Tourism & Economic Development Manager

At 4:30pm the Group was advised that quorum had not been reached, and therefore the meeting lapsed. The Group received two presentations and noted that the remaining items will be deferred to the next meeting.

PRESENTATIONS

EG24.9 CEO Address - Robyn Stevens

HPERM Ref:
D24/197102

Ms Robyn Stevens - Chief Executive Officer, addressed the Group to introduce herself, speak on the key priorities of Council and welcome any input from members.

EG24.10 Economy Overview from Shoalhaven Transactional Data - Localis Data Company - Robbie Dalton

HPERM Ref:
D24/199138

Mr Robbie Dalton from the Localis Data Company presented to the Group and gave an economy overview from Shoalhaven Transactional Data. The information presented will be sent to members following the publishing of these minutes.

Apologies / Leave of Absence

Apologies were received from Cllr John Kotlash, Gareth Ward MP, John Lamont, Iain Chalmers, Anna Finch, Michelle Bishop and Courtney Butler.

Confirmation of the Minutes

Note: This item will be deferred to the next Shoalhaven Economic Growth & Advocacy Group meeting.

REPORTS

EG24.11 Advocacy and Growth - Staff Update

**HPERM Ref:
D24/170587**

Note: An updated report will be provided to the next Shoalhaven Economic Growth & Advocacy Group meeting.

Mr Robert Crow
CHAIRPERSON

EG24.12 Advocacy and Growth - Staff Update

HPERM Ref: D24/245655

Department: Tourism & Economic Development

Approver: Coralie McCarthy, Acting Director - City Futures

Reason for Report

The purpose of this report is to provide the Shoalhaven Economic Growth and Advocacy (SEGA) group with an update on key projects in the City Futures Directorate.

Recommendation (Item to be determined under delegated authority)

That the Shoalhaven Economic Growth and Advocacy Group receive this report for their information.

Options

1. Receive this report for information.

Implications: The SEGA group will be provided with a high-level overview of key priorities and projects.

2. Request additional information.

Implications: Staff will provide additional information during the meeting if possible, or later after further investigation.

Background

The Tourism and Economic Development team within Shoalhaven City Council provide regular reports to the SEGA group. Below you will find information covering local business support activities, event insights, strategy reviews, open funding opportunities, visitor statistics and various council updates.

The previous SEGA meeting on 27 May 2024 did not meet quorum, resulting in reports being deferred. Therefore, this staff update report covers the content from the previous meeting, as well as recent updates.

Managers Update – Financial Sustainability

Staff undertook an in-depth service review of visitor services operations across the region under direction of the Financial Sustainability Project. The review resulted in the Executive Management Team and Councillors endorsing a change to operations that includes reducing the opening hours and box office shift lengths to save estimated \$105,000. These changes are currently in place, after being trialled in May and June.

Economic Growth Update

Council staff have participated in, or provided feedback towards the following Economic Development matters:

- Attended meetings of the Shoalhaven Motor Sports Working Group
- Member of the Nowra Riverfront Action Taskforce

- Organised and attended the April 2024 CEO Business Forum
- Member of the Shoalhaven Careers Advisors Network (SCAN)
- Support and attend the Shoalhaven Professional Business Association meetings and events
- Supported the South Coast Beef Association's Steer Spectacular event
- Attend/Present at various Business Chamber meetings and hosted Business Chamber round-table discussions with Council staff
- Supported and advocated for businesses impacted by recent flood events
- Attended meetings and briefings regarding the 24hr Economy Uptown and Accelerator programs
- Attended and facilitated Illawarra Shoalhaven Regional Defence Network events and showcases
- Attended Tourism Australia's RTO Forum and Destination Australia Conference
- Attended the Investment Logic Mapping workshop for the Nowra Bypass.
- Attended DSSS and Destination NSW Visitor Economy Strategy Review Workshop

Advocacy Update

The 2024/25 version of the Key Projects Advocacy Guide is in draft. This document will replace the current [Advocacy Document](#), and include updated key priorities in-line with Council's key priority areas for funding from Federal and State Government.

Strategy Reviews

- Currently reviewing Councils Shoalhaven Economic Development Strategy and the Tourism Destination Management Plan to map out alignment, goals and actions ready to collaborate with stakeholders before renewal.
- Council is part of a working group to develop a broader Illawarra Shoalhaven Economic Development Strategy, which is being led by the Illawarra Shoalhaven Joint Organisation. This Strategy was launched on 28 June 2024.
- Reviewing and providing a submission to the draft Community Improvement Districts Bill 2023, being led by Transport for NSW. Submissions were due 29 March 2024. Further information can be found [here](#).
- Reviewing and providing comment to the draft discussion paper on Short Term rental Accommodation (STRA) alongside Council's Strategic Planning team to provide feedback to Planning NSW. Further information can be found [here](#).
- Reviewed and provided a submission to the draft Shellharbour Airport Master Plan regarding benefits to tourism and the economy. The draft plan can be found [here](#).
- Meeting with Telstra Regional NSW staff and the review of the actions under the Telstra Connectivity Plan.

Defence and Manufacturing Sector Development

- Illawarra Shoalhaven Regional Defence Network - member of the Steering Committee and ongoing involvement in arranging events and programs:
 - Arrange regular Illawarra Shoalhaven Regional Defence Network lunch events
 - Defence Career Videos and Case Studies are being created
 - Capability mapping project is underway
 - Stallholder at Illawarra Career Expo in May 2024

- Upgrade of information and material on the Network’s website
- Ongoing social media content being developed and promoted.
- Support and attendance of relevant programs and events such as the Defence Industry Conference in March and Defence Industry breakfast in July.
- Creation of the Aircraft Maintenance Engineer attraction program to address skills shortages.
- Securing a 12-month extension to the NSW Government funding for the Regional Defence Network

Industrial Land Updates

The sale process of Council Employment/Industrial Land has recently changed due to the Councillor’s resolution of 25 March 2024 (MIN24.171C) excerpt below:

4. That any future employment land is sold without any restriction as to use or compulsion to complete building works within a specified timeframe., and future employment land is sold for not less than an independent market valuation.

5. That Council’s Employment Land (Industrial Land) policy be developed to reflect the abovementioned resolutions.

- Flinders Stage 11 - Ongoing development to create 4 lots available for sale.
- AATP Stage 5 – Approaching completion and will progress to a sale process of 15 available lots.
- Woollamia Stage 5a - Ongoing development to create 6 available lots for sale.
- Remaining lots in Woollamia Stage 5 and Flinders Stage 10 - The 5 remaining lots across these 2 industrial areas were recently sold.

Local Business Support

- Attendance at Destination NSW inbound tourism workshops in region, and attendance at DSSS Centre of Excellence familiarisations
- Discussion with CommBank regarding Local Business Insights, Council strategies and their IQ data service
- Discussion with Economy id to discuss the new modules on offer
- Discussions with relocation businesses and career opportunities for Shoalhaven residents
- Discussions with Illawarra & South Coast Jobs Network re: Introduction to the ‘Get a Job South Coast’
- The Economic Development team hosted AusIndustry in April to discuss closer working relationships and additional opportunities to support local businesses via funding programs, business services and information sharing
- Attendance at Shoalhaven Business Awards Launch, which was held at Harry Sawkins Park with the Nowra Farmers Market
- Attended the launch of the Shoalhaven Food Network Autumn Food Event
- Meeting with Regional Development Australia’s new CEO Selena Stevens to gain a better understanding of the new RDA Illawarra Shoalhaven and its boundaries

- Visited the SCC Flood Recovery Centre at the Nowra Showground
- Attendance at the SPBA May breakfast and associated Think Regional workshop.
- Attendance at the Nowra workshop for the AG.Biz Ready workshop on 3 June 2024.

Economy Data

The Peak Period Comparison report shows Nov 2023 – Jan 2024* Spend transactional data from Localis Data Company that primarily maps transactions from the VISA network for both local and visitor spend. This report is benchmarked against other destinations such as Orange and Noosa, and factors in insights from other Localis data such as accommodation booking and mobility (mobile phone location) data from 2023.

Key insights are as follows:

- Transaction data in Shoalhaven showed a 13% drop in local spend and a 20% drop in visitor spend from November 2023 to Jan 2024 compared to the same period in the previous years
- January 2024 spend in Shoalhaven by visitors dropped 36%
- January 2024 spend in Shoalhaven by locals dropped 18%
- Shoalhaven accommodation bookings averaged 30-40% of capacity during the months of July through to October 2023, as compared to Noosa and Orange in the same period who averaged around 60 – 70% occupancy
- Market segments with the largest downturn of visitor spend (year on year) in Shoalhaven for the period of November to January:
 - - 36% on hotels and lodging
 - - 21% restaurants & dining
 - - 20% on retail
 - - 20% on entertainment

Localis data company provided a Spend Report for the period of February and March 2024 which showed similar trends of decreased spend in region from both locals and visitors.

- Tourism Research Australia data year ending December 2023 shows an annual total estimated visitor expenditure of \$1.485 billion. This total was growing steadily but has been volatile since hitting the \$1 billion mark in December 2019. Data for March 2024 shows the total estimated visitor expenditure of 1.450 billion, however total visitation dropped by 2% year on year for this period **

*Localis Data Company, VISA, mobility and Accommodation booking insights November 2023 to January 2024

**Tourism Research Australia National and International Visitor Survey 2019 – 2023

Marketing and Promotion

- Activated Shop Shoalhaven campaigns for Easter and Mother’s Day, as well as new features to bundle bespoke hampers. A new call out was made for additional products also.
- Soft launch and business consultation of the new business-to-business website has occurred, with testing underway before promotion.

- Preparation Autumn Wellness post-campaign report is underway, with articles coming through from journalist familiarisations in March, and analysis of leads to website and industry from advertising.
- With reduced budget available at this time, a basic food campaign for winter will be launched in June, consisting mainly of publicity and digital marketing.
- Tourism Marketing Specialist attending the Australian Tourism Exchange with collaborative international marketing brand for the South Coast, The Grand Pacific Drive.
- A food campaign for winter with the theme “New, Well-reviewed or with Great Views” was launched in June to promote the regions food and drink offerings and off-season visitation.
- Work on the next Travel Guide is underway. An editorial layout is coming together, and advertisers are booking in.
- Berry and Huskisson both won their categories of small and tiny town respectively at the NSW Top Tourism Town Awards. Berry gained Hall of Fame status for the small town category and Huskisson won their category for the second year in a row. These applications are a collaboration between Council’s team and the Chambers of Commerce.
- A plan for the 2024/25 financial year’s marketing and business development activity is being informed by an operator survey to identify the most valuable activities to the business community and allocate budget accordingly.

Event Update General

- The Uptown Grant Program - Office of the 24-Hour Commissioner
 - The Uptown District Acceleration Program is a two-stage program designed to fast-track the formation of local business communities and facilitate the growth of their districts into vibrant going-out hubs.
 - Round 3 was the first time the program was opened to regional areas.
 - Applications for this round opened mid-April and closed the end of May 2024. The events team promoted this program and organised an information session for local businesses took place on Thursday 11 April at Council Chambers which was well attended.
 - The Shoalhaven was lucky enough to have 4 of the 25 successful District Teams participating in this round. The Shoalhaven District teams are from Nowra, Berry, Huskisson & Sussex Inlet.
- The DNSW Regional Event Fund
 - Destination NSW will support 66 events across regional NSW through the 2024-25 Regional Event Fund.
 - The funding program provides an important economic boost in regional areas by supporting visitor economy operators, injecting vitality into communities and creating jobs.
 - The funding round closed in April, and the Shoalhaven had 11 event organisers apply for the grant, the events team supported them by provided

letters of support, local tourism data from Localis Data Company and event specific REMPLAN reports.

- 6 of the 66 successful events were from the Shoalhaven:
 - Incubator Stream
 - MAKE GOOD Festival
 - Ultra Trail Jervis Bay
 - OpenField Arts Festival
 - Buangla Music & Arts Festival
 - Flagship Stream
 - StoryFest 2025
 - The Bay Games
- The events team continue a review of policies and procedures, working to streamline the event application process. The first stage of this review is now completed, with the Pop-Up Stall permit application and Film permit application has now been moved online via the council website.
- General update on events processed through the Tourism & Economic Development Events Team on Council owned or managed land in:
 - Between January and March:
 - There were 63* events processed and permitted on Council land.
 - These events included monthly markets, triathlons, sporting competitions, music festivals and the local agriculture shows.
 - There has been an increase in monthly markets as well as more larger scale events (more than 1000 attendees) across the region.
 - Between April and June:
 - The team permitted 40 events on Council owned or managed land this quarter, bringing the total number of events processed by the Events Team this financial year to 198.
 - These events included regular markets, adventure races, sporting competitions, cultural festivals, charity fundraisers and the local ANZAC Day services.
 - The team supported 11 ANZAC Day marches and services across the region, with most services requiring additional support with traffic guidance schemes and traffic control.
 - Heavy rainfall and flood events across the Shoalhaven and additional 7 permitted events or markets were cancelled.

**This count taken from internal events calendar run by events team as at 28.06.2024*

Event Support Program (Grants)

The February 2024 Round of the Event Support Program is on hold due to Council's current Financial Sustainability measures. The round received 33 applications for new events prior to the funding cuts, resulting in no new funding being awarded. 33 applicants represented a 57% increase in applications than in the previous round.

From previous rounds of funding, the below sponsored events have run in 2024:

- Volleymook Tour – Mollymook
- Brumbies Rugby South Coast 7's – Ulladulla
- Classic Car Show & Shine – Sussex Inlet
- Rhythmic & Aerobic Gymnastics State Championships – Bomaderry
- Beer & BBQ Festival – Huskisson
- Viking Festival – Sussex Inlet

Still to come in the second half of 2024 is:

- Summit Shoalhaven – Kangaroo Valley & Surrounds
- Buangla Music and Arts Festival – Coolendel
- Coast Forage – Vincentia
- Volleyball NSW State Championships – Mollymook
- Huskisson Triathlon Festival – Huskisson

Visitor Information Services

Visitation has been steady at the Nowra and Ulladulla Information Centres with returning travellers and visitors tending to opt for prolonged stays. Our National Parks continue to be a major draw card as are events such as the Viking Festival, held June 8th, which the team attended with a pop-up Visitor Information stand. The weather has certainly been a challenge of late and the Visitor Centre team have been providing local information on the ground around road conditions and directions to best suit individual visitor needs. Enquiries around the best Whale watching opportunities have been popular and the Autumn celebration of food has been providing many opportunities to sample local produce and unique dining experiences. Our dedicated Mobile Tourism Van has been actively distributing essential guides, including the latest edition of Our Favourite Walks booklet and guide deliveries to coincide with the July school holidays.

In the realm of local commerce, the [Shop Shoalhaven](#) online store has expanded its range by incorporating additional local suppliers, thereby broadening its array of regional products. This expansion comes with the exciting introduction of new specially curated hampers, these hampers not only offer a unique gift option but also support the local economy.

In alignment with directives from Shoalhaven City Council, the management team has been diligently working towards enhancing operational efficiencies and achieving cost savings. As part of this initiative, the Nowra Visitor Centre has undergone a trial period of altered operating hours, ceasing Sunday operations, and reducing Saturday hours. This change is set to continue into the forthcoming financial year, ensuring that community needs, and organisational objectives continue to be met effectively.

Grants Spotlight – Current Business and Community Opportunities

Club Grants Category 3 Funding – Office of Responsible Gambling

Multiple streams of funding for community Infrastructure upgrades

Round 2 - Applications close 25 November 2024

The NSW Government will commit \$12.75 million for projects that support the community through the construction, rebuild, repair and upgrade of community infrastructure. Infrastructure Grants can be used for costs such as construction, the purchase of capital equipment and professional fees. Examples of projects range from local sports ground facilities, public swimming pools, children's play areas, museums, art galleries, theatres and upgrades to evacuation centres, or community welfare infrastructure that supports youth, mental health and wellbeing.

Community led applications can receive 100% external funding. Community projects must be aligned with Council strategic plans and be delivery ready. This process takes time and community groups that are interested in applying to this funding source are encouraged to work with Council in a proactive manner to meet all the business case, compliance and landowners consent requirements.

Only one application per organisation per round. Funding is available in four key categories:

- Arts and Culture – up to \$200,000 per project
- Community Infrastructure – up to \$250,000 per project
- Disaster Readiness – up to \$200,000 per project
- Sport and Recreation - up to \$300,000 per project

For more information and access to funding guidelines please click [here](#).

Strengthening Rural Communities Program – Small and Vital Stream

Grants available up to \$10,000 community led resilience projects

Round 22 is OPEN - Applications close 5 September 2024

The small and vital stream gives rural and regional communities the opportunity to access funds for a broad range of initiatives that directly benefit local communities. Local incorporated groups are eligible to apply.

Grants up to \$10,000 are available for community led projects that support thriving, resilient and sustainable communities. Examples of successful projects include:

- Cultural festivals
- Providing laptops to disadvantaged school students
- Upgrading the facilities and equipment at men's sheds
- Purchasing lawn mowing equipment to support at-home mowing services for elderly residents
- Creative arts workshops for youth engagement and improving social outcomes
- Installing a perimeter fence around a community hall to increase community use
- Improving health and wellbeing by supporting upgrades to community gardens
- Upgrading telecommunications equipment for local marine rescue units

More information is available on the FRRR website located [here](#).

Minimum Viable Product (MVP) Program – NSW Dept Enterprise Investment and Trade

Grants available up to \$50,000 to support product development

Round 3 is OPEN - Applications close 28 February 2025

This program aims to support businesses to increase the commercialisation of innovative products and services, and to attract and retain commercialisation activities in NSW. The MVP Ventures Program supports startups and innovative SMEs in the product lifecycle between early-stage research and mature investment opportunities.

The objective of the MVP Ventures Program is to:

- Support businesses to increase commercialisation in NSW
- The MVP Ventures Program will support businesses throughout the journey. Innovative firms who successfully complete projects funded under the Program are permitted to reapply for additional funding to make further progress along the Technology Readiness Level (TRL) scale.

The NSW Government will provide up to \$3 million per annum for the program up to 2027. Products must be aligned to one of the following NSW Government priority industries:

- Agriculture and agrifood
- Defence and aerospace
- Clean energy and waste
- Medical and life sciences
- Digital systems and software
- International education
- Visitor economy
- Advanced manufacturing
- Biotechnologies and
- Digital technologies

To be eligible organisations must also demonstrate a minimum 50 per cent cash contribution and be able to complete projects within 12 months of funding.

For a full list of all the eligibility criteria and to access the funding guidelines please click [here](#).

Staff Updates

Updates for Tourism and Economic Development:

- **Anna McDonald** joined the team as the new Marketing Liaison Officer on 11 June
- **Renee Wenban** resigned as Event Liaison Officer
- **Zeah McMillan** has joined the events team as Event Liaison Officer on 29 May
- **Emelie Einarsson** remains on maternity leave
- **Lindsay Conway** remains filling in as the Visitors Services Manager full time
- **Kristy Mayhew** remains Acting Tourism and Economic Development Manager

EG24.13 Framework for Strategic Plan - Economic Development & Tourism 2025 - 2030

HPERM Ref: D24/278615

Department: Tourism & Economic Development

Approver: Coralie McCarthy, Acting Director - City Futures

Reason for Report

The purpose of this report is to provide the Shoalhaven Economic Growth and Advocacy (SEGA) group with an update on the framework for the review and amalgamation of the Shoalhaven Economic Development Strategy and Shoalhaven Destination Management Plan.

Recommendation (Item to be determined under delegated authority)

That the Shoalhaven Economic Growth and Advocacy Group (SEGA) receive this report and support the staff approach to development of the Economic Development and Tourism Strategy, including:

1. Merging the Destination Management Plan and the Economic Development Strategy into one strategic whole of economy growth strategy
2. Support the proposal of progressing the document by allocating staff time to completing this work within available resources, noting budget limitations.
3. Recognise the need for ongoing consultation with business as the project progresses and support in principle an industry working group to be created to assist with this project.
4. Support ongoing advocacy for funding to assist in the creation of this strategy.

Options

1. Adopt the recommendation as written

Implications: The SEGA group receive this report and support the staff approach to development of the Economic Development and Tourism Strategy.

2. That the Shoalhaven Economic Growth and Advocacy Group request additional information.

Implications: Staff will provide additional information during the meeting if possible, or later after further investigation.

Background

Shoalhaven City Council's Tourism and Economic Development team have the following strategic plans in place, the Shoalhaven Economic Development Strategy 2017-2026, the Shoalhaven Destination Management Plan 2018-2023, and the Shoalhaven Tourism Recovery Action Plan.

The Tourism and Economic Development teams have operationally merged and both strategies are prioritised for review, it is recommended that there be an amalgamation into one key strategic document to 2030.

Due to current resources under Council’s Financial Sustainability Review, the project has not received funding for delivery. As a result, the Tourism Department and Economic Development are currently progressing through the initial stages of an internal review and amalgamation of the documents.

The [Economic Development Strategy](#) provides an implementation platform for the many and varied economic development opportunities that have been identified through detailed stakeholder discussions and review of several Local, Regional, State and Federal level initiatives.

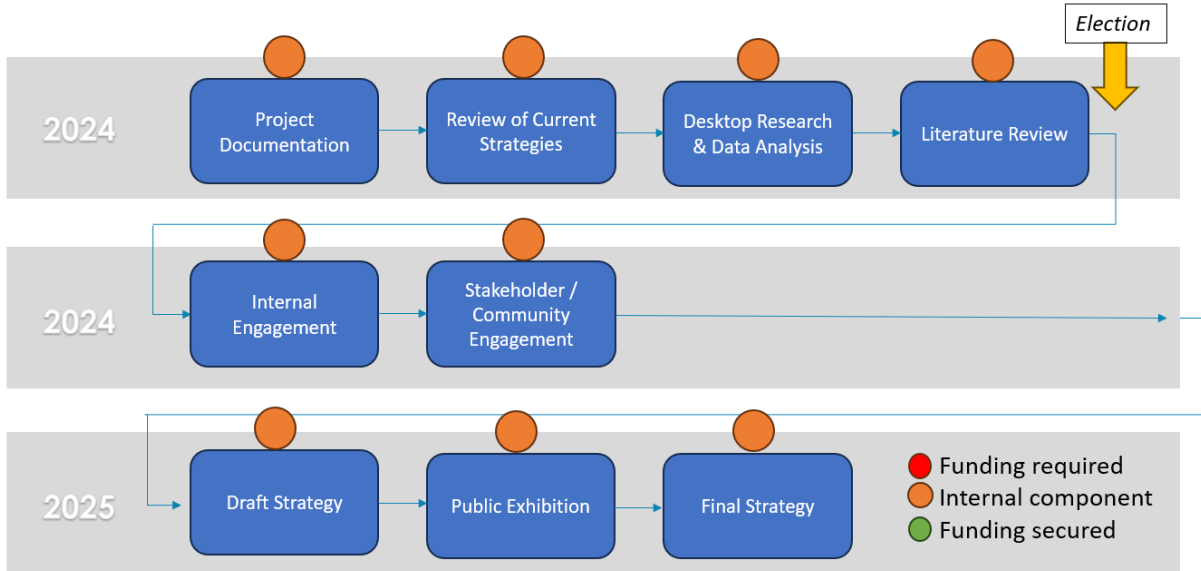
The [Destination Management Plan \(DMP\)](#) identifies Tourism as one of the key industries in the Shoalhaven economy and a continued commitment to the strategic focus areas identified in the plan will be critical to ensure sustainable visitation growth continues in the coming years. In February 2023, the [Shoalhaven Tourism Recovery Action Plan](#) was created with industry consultation as a roadmap of key actions to support industry into recovery from events such as bushfire, COVID and other natural disasters which were not foreseen or accounted for when the DMP was created in 2018.

Once the documents are amalgamated, they will guide the work of the Tourism and Economic Development Department moving forward, as it will reflect the current state of play and the needs of industry. The framework for the internal review is outlined below.

Framework and Timeline for the Review

A framework and timeline have been identified for the project, which is depicted below. This outlines the key steps of the project to achieve completion and adoption of the document.

Due to the lack of funding for an external resource to assist in building the strategy and assisting with consultation processes, the staff will undertake the strategy development in-house which will result in the estimated completion date of the new strategy in June 2025. If funding becomes available, this timeframe could be expediated.



Stakeholder Engagement

A key aspect for this project will be via consultation with internal and external stakeholders. Consultation with Council's internal stakeholders is currently underway, and consultation with the new Council will occur after the Local Government elections in September.

Consultation with external stakeholders will include several methods, including online surveys and workshops. An industry working group will be established to represent various industry sectors and obtain detailed feedback. Buy in and participation from SEGA, business chambers, industry groups and businesses are viewed as being crucial to the project,

Like other forms of consultation run by Council, there is a reliance on these external groups to assist in promoting participation to the consultation.

Policy Implications

The review and amalgamation of the Shoalhaven Economic Development Strategy and Shoalhaven Destination Management Plan aligns with Theme 3 of the Shoalhaven 2032 Community Strategic Plan.



Financial Implications

Due to Council's Financial Sustainability Review and a lack of funding to this project, the review will be completed internally by Council staff. It is anticipated that minimal funding will be required for an internal review, not including staff time.

Next Steps

Staff will continue to progress the project forwards. As the project approaches the stakeholder engagement stage, the relevant stakeholders (including SEGA, Business Chambers, industry groups, businesses, and community) will be notified of the upcoming consultation and informed how to participate.

It is anticipated that EOI's will be called regarding representation on the industry working group.

EG24.14 Economic Development & Tourism - Marketing Activity Stakeholder Engagement Plan - Financial Year 2024 / 25

HPERM Ref: D24/278618

Department: Tourism & Economic Development
Approver: Coralie McCarthy, Acting Director - City Futures

Reason for Report

The purpose of this report is to provide the Shoalhaven Economic Growth and Advocacy (SEGA) group with the methodology for stakeholder consultation in development of the plan for marketing in the 2024/25 financial year.

Recommendation (Item to be determined under delegated authority)

That the Shoalhaven Economic Growth and Advocacy Group (SEGA) receive this report and support the proposed method for consultation of marketing activity for 2024/25 financial year.

Options

1. Adopt the recommendation as written

Implications: The SEGA group receive this report and support the proposed method for development of the marketing plan for the 2024/25 financial year.

2. That the Shoalhaven Economic Growth and Advocacy Group request additional information.

Implications: Staff will provide additional information during the meeting if possible, or later after further investigation.

Background

Council's Tourism and Economic Development team provide business development and marketing activity to support the growth of the local economy and sustainability of local industries. Shoalhaven is made up of approximately 8,115 businesses that deliver a Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of \$7.905 billion*. The total estimated spend of visitors to the region alone is \$1.45 billion**

Council sets an annual operational budget for the Tourism and Economic Development Team to support industry with marketing and business development services. Marketing activities are conducted based on established industry promotional pillars research that provides insight into the most valuable target markets, promotional channels, and return on investment metrics. Partnerships and funding for business development activities such as training, networking and advocacy are also prioritised in budgets.

Economic Development activities are primarily business to business activity and Tourism activities are primarily based on consumer activities that drive visitation in the off-season and promote to visitors who will spend more and stay longer. Success of previous marketing activities such as the Unspoilt Campaign and winter marketing activities have led to the

estimated growth of the Visitor Economy by 72% in the five years from December 2018 (\$863 million) to December 2023 (\$1.485 billion).***

Co-operative marketing funds from the State Government have supported marketing activity of the visitor economy up until 2022, however there are no longer funds available, making the efficient and equitable use of Council's budget a priority.

**REMPPLAN 2023 – 2024 Financial year*

***Tourism Research Australia National and International Visitor Survey year to date March 2024.*

**** Tourism Research Australia National and International Visitor Survey year to date December 2018 - 2023.*

Plan Development

The team has drafted a critical path timeline for marketing activity that encompasses 70+ promotional and support activities across Tourism Marketing, Economic Development, Visitor Services, Events, Advocacy, and Product Development. This critical path provides a 12 month schedule of activities that are resources.

Recently, resources for delivering these activities have been considered in Council's financial sustainability project and consequently, the team wishes to identify the priorities of industry to allocate activity and subsequent budget to the areas most valued.

A survey was created in mid-July and for distribution to industry. The distribution plan for the survey is extensive and will be in market for approximately five weeks. The goal for sample size is 5% of the Shoalhaven business community.

The [survey here](#), requests respondents to rank the follow activities according to the value for their businesses, amongst other questions around business confidence and general feedback:

Business Support and Services provided:

- Advocacy to State and Federal Governments and associated bodies (DNSW, Tourism Australia etc).
- Free photography and videography (Shoalhaven Stories).
- Visits / familiarisations to your business from our staff.
- Check in / phone calls post-disaster or similar.
- Support in troubleshooting free listings such as ATDW etc.
- Networking and presentations for / to industry.
- Provision of data and insights (Tourism Research Australia, Spend, Accommodation, Mobility, REMPLAN etc).
- Business to Business email newsletter (monthly) and website (NEW).
- Ad hoc support or advice from our team when you have questions.
- Event support in approvals and logistics.
- Marketing funds for chambers or industry bodies.
- Provide free destination imagery and video for your business use.
- Attend conferences and industry events (ATE etc) to represent the region.
- Support letters and sharing appropriate grant opportunities.
- Free delivery of visitor guides and other communications materials.
- Facilitation of Council's industry committee - SEGA Shoalhaven Economy Growth and Advocacy group.
- Referrals and management of Live Chat, email and phone enquiries from potential visitors.
- Sponsorship of events.
- Entering Awards for the region or towns (Top Towns, NSW Tourism Awards etc).

- Funds for Business Development and Training.
- Investment attraction and development.
- Funds for School/Uni/TAFE programs and employment opportunities.
- Emergency support communications and coordination for industry.
- Assistance and concierge of business through Council processes.
- Sharing of relevant local events, workshops, programs etc.

Promotional / Marketing Activities:

- Organic (free) social media on Facebook, Instagram and TikTok.
- Publicity Campaigns, journalist write ups and visits in region.
- shoalhaven.com content - free listings, blogs and trip planner etc.
- Digital marketing to that provides links back to your business.
- Paid print ads in newspaper, magazines or similar.
- Billboards / outdoor advertising in outside the region (Sydney, Canberra etc).
- Paid social media marketing that provides links back to content and your business.
- What's on event listings on shoalhaven.com.
- Conscious Traveller Campaigns in Summer to help manage consumer behaviour.
- 100 Beach Challenge in Summer to help spread people out from hot spots.
- Foodie Campaigns in Winter to drive off-season visitation.
- Adventure / wellness campaigns in Autumn to drive off-season visitation.
- Provision of free maps and small (A5 & DL) experience brochures.
- Shoalhaven Visitor Guide Publication and free distribution.
- Monthly consumer newsletter to 10,000 visitors.
- Face-to-Face service desks offering product referrals and advice in Nowra, Jervis Bay and Ulladulla.
- Local media advertising in newspaper, TV, Radio etc.
- Product development activities – creating trails and supporting new businesses.
- Sales promotion of Shoalhaven Online Shop (New) activity.

Stakeholder Engagement

Distribution plan for the survey includes sharing through Council's own Tourism and Economic Development business to business channels; via industry bodies such as Destination Sydney Surrounds South, and the Shoalhaven Professional Business Association; to business chambers and their members; print materials via Visitor Services desks and during delivery of visitor guide; in Council's community newsletter, website and LinkedIn; and through Publicity to local media outlets.

SEGA is a key industry representative, and their support of the processes is appreciated as is the distribution of the survey to their own networks.

Policy Implications

There are no policy implications as such, as The SEGA Group works in an advisory role to Council and are not required to endorse operational activities.

Financial Implications

Support of the recommendation as written will allow business owners and industry representatives in Shoalhaven to share their feedback in development of Tourism and Economic Development activities and resultant budget allocation in an equitable manner.

Next Steps

With the support of The SEGA Group, staff will collate feedback from the survey and develop the activities for the financial year based on the outcomes.