



# DESTINATION **PORT STEPHENS**

STRATEGIC PLAN 2018-2021

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The strategic priorities and actions outlined in the Destination Port Stephens Strategic Plan 2018-2021 are to be implemented by Destination Port Stephens through a partnership model with tourism businesses and stakeholders over a three year timeframe.

Destination Port Stephens will focus on four strategic priorities designed to improve Port Stephens competitive position, stimulate demand, build capability and continue to grow the visitor economy and associated benefits for the destination:

### 1. GROW

Grow brand Port Stephens

### 2. DRIVE

Drive destination marketing to increase visitor expenditure

### 3. BUILD

Build deep stakeholder relationships

### 4. SUPPORT

Support big events and big ideas

# INTRODUCTION

Destination Port Stephens (DPS) is a non-profit, incorporated body supported by Port Stephens Council (PSC), owned by members and autonomously managed by a Board of nine industry representatives.

Funding for DPS is sourced primarily from an annual investment from Port Stephens Council, members, strategic partners and hard-won grants. Ultimately, it is up to industry – the members – to support the organisation that, will in turn, ensure growth in the visitor economy.

DPS creates, develops and implements a range of projects and marketing programs aimed at increasing brand awareness and intention to travel across key

domestic and international visitor source markets. In partnership with members, the organisation also implements a range of tactical marketing campaigns to drive conversions and grow overnight visitation.

DPS advocates for members in areas of policy and regulation across the visitor economy, builds collaborative networks throughout the region to create opportunities for new and existing tourism product.

Our focus is to to drive destination marketing, destination management and destination development strategies to increase the overnight visitor spend across Port Stephens.

## 1.

### OUR VISION

**For Port Stephens to be recognised as the leading regional tourism destination in NSW.**



## 2.

### OUR PURPOSE

**To double visitor expenditure to \$1 billion annually by 2030.**







# THE PORT STEPHENS EXPERIENCE

Port Stephens is one of NSW leading regional destinations, attracting over 1.5 million visitors (domestic and international) and it is for year ending June 2018. Home to more than 70,000 people, Port Stephens is located just north of Newcastle and around 2.5 hours drive north of Sydney on the NSW North Coast.

Port Stephens is an area of outstanding natural beauty, its ancient volcanic islands are within easy reach of the spectacular entrance of a harbour twice the size of Sydney's. The largest mobile sand dunes in the Southern Hemisphere offer front row seats for more than half the year to view some of the largest mammals on earth - the Humpback Whale.

The 98,000-hectare Port Stephens Great Lakes Marine Park is home to seals, turtles and penguins and more than 100 resident Bottlenose dolphins. The 23km of dramatic coastal walks in the Tomaree National Park offer spectacular vantage points that will bring out the photographer in everyone! Port Stephens is currently in the process of nomination as a World Heritage Estuary and Catchment because of its vast biodiversity of wildlife - it truly is Mother Nature's playground.

Port Stephens is the home of the Worimi Aboriginal Nation and offers visitors many unique, authentic and remarkable experiences within the natural landscape. The Stockton Bight Sand Dunes in the Worimi Conversation Lands is a significant place and home to an extraordinary number of ancient cultural sites.

Port Stephens has developed as a well-known short break destination for domestic visitors to relax, unwind and leave invigorated. The area also attracts a significant volume of international visitors primarily for day trips (estimated to be over 200,000).

Known for its picturesque bays, family-friendly beaches and great fishing, the area has been a beloved family holiday destination which attracts generations of families primarily over the peak school holiday periods.

This Strategic Plan 2018-20 identifies key opportunities for the destination to further grow the benefits from tourism, while enhancing economic, social and ecological sustainability of the region.



# SITUATION ANALYSIS

## STRENGTHS

- **Accessible**, yet delivers a sense of escape
- Considered a '**green**' **seaside** destination with low density population, national parks, marine park, nature and wildlife and unspoilt natural beauty
- Largest mobile **sand dunes** in the southern hemisphere
- **Wildlife** – dolphins, whales, koalas, kangaroos, birds, sea turtles and seals
- Volume of things to do and **unique experiences**
- Easily **accessed by road** from Sydney and surrounding regions
- **Proximity** to Newcastle Airport with daily flights from key domestic source markets
- **Seaside village** atmosphere
- Range of **accommodation** from luxury hotels, holiday parks and holiday homes/apartments.
- Strong association for **family holidays**
- Abundance of **local produce**
- Renewed investment in **tourism product**
- Council investment in **event acquisition** and **attraction**
- Ongoing strategic and **financial investment** from Port Stephens Council

## CHALLENGES

- Financial resourcing
- Inconsistent service levels
- Brand rejuvenation
- Trading hours of cafes and retailers not meeting visitor needs
- Night time economy
- Signage and wayfinding
- Seasonality
- Congestion at peak times
- Cross region partnerships
- Event infrastructure
- Investment in large scale meeting facilities
- Coach parking facilities
- Investment in iconic attractions and tours
- Co-operative marketing partnerships
- Ageing infrastructure
- Investment in training and education





## OPPORTUNITIES

- Commitment from all key stakeholders to a **renewed branding strategy**
- Increased collaboration with industry organisations on **product development** opportunities
- Iconic **new product**
- Construction of Port Stephens **Koala Sanctuary**
- Funding for the development of the **Coastal Walk**
- **Council investment** in town centres and public domain
- **Strong mix of nature based product**
- **International flights** at Newcastle Airport
- **Regional collaborations** for key target markets
- **New export ready product**
- Increased investment in the event and conference markets to **increase non-peak visitation**
- **Develop product** based on local history, nature and seafood to drive visitor dispersal and length of stay
- Increased investment in **digital marketing**
- **Relationships** with key stakeholders
- **Target high yield** segments to increase visitor spend
- **Develop partnerships** with travel trade partners and content platforms
- Investment in the **Birubi Point Tourism Interchange**

## THREATS

- Increasing competition from regional destinations
- Low cost domestic and international flights
- Reduced member support and investment
- Investment in the upgrade of Newcastle Airport Runway
- Congestion on M1 Motorway and Nelson Bay Road
- Lack of investment in new and existing product
- Old and tired infrastructure in key visitor locations
- Peak season visitation
- Negative impacts to the local environment
- Local government elections and changes to current Council priorities



# THE PORT STEPHENS VISITOR ECONOMY IN 2017

Year end June '000	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	5 year average
Domestic overnight visitors	630	654	619	655	703	652
% change	-8%	4%	-5%	5.80%	7.40%	1%
Domestic nights	2,022	2,352	2,082	2,074	2,147	2,135
% change	-5%	16%	-11%	0%	4%	1%
av night stay	3.2	3.6	3.4	3.2	3.1	3.3
Domestic day visitors	701	747	751	620	820	728
% change	4%	7%	1%	-17%	32%	5%
International overnight visitors <sup>1</sup>	27	26	26	38	44	32
% change	12%	-4%	0%	46%	16%	14%
International Nights	109	136	75	166	145	126
Year end June Total Visitors	1,357	1,427	1,396	1,313	1,567	1,412
Year end June Total Nights <sup>2</sup>	2,131	2,488	2,157	2,240	2,292	2,261
Total Visitor Expenditure <sup>3</sup>	\$502 million			\$539 million		

## GROWTH FORECASTS 2026



Source: National Visitor Survey and International Visitor Survey, Tourism Research Australia.

<sup>1</sup> Visitor Expenditure year ending December 2017 - four year average. <sup>2</sup> Year end March 2018 (latest available data at time of publication).

<sup>3</sup> Domestic year ending June 2018 and International year ending March 2018.



OUR VISITOR ECONOMY INJECTS



\$61K

PER HOUR

into the PORT STEPHENS  
local economy

\$539

MILLION in visitor  
expenditure

2.3



MILLION  
visitor nights

\$1.5

MILLION  
a day into the  
local economy



1,567,000  
visitors



Average stay of  
3 NIGHTS DOMESTIC



Average stay of  
5 NIGHTS INTERNATIONAL



EMPLOYS  
2,221



DOMESTIC  
OVERNIGHT

\$213pp

average spend per night



INTERNATIONAL  
OVERNIGHT

\$85pp

average spend per night



DOMESTIC  
DAY VISITORS

\$95pp

average spend per day

# ENABLERS FOR GROWTH



## A UNITED INDUSTRY

For the tourism industry and stakeholders to be united on priorities



## SOLID PARTNERSHIPS

Successful collaboration between tourism, industry, public sector and Government agencies, investors and other stakeholders



## QUALITY PRODUCTS AND EXPERIENCES

Support start up and scale up investment across the visitor economy



## CO-OPERATIVE MARKETING INVESTMENT TO DRIVE DEMAND

Increase investment in marketing programs to drive demand



## BRINGING NEIGHBOURHOODS TO LIFE

Create vibrant villages and towns that embrace visitors and increase the economic benefits of tourism







## GAME CHANGERS

”

The vision for delivering on the potential Port Stephens' visitor economy is based on securing investment in game-changing projects.

Development opportunities should focus on adding depth, range and quality to our visitor experiences, events, neighbourhoods and products which are important motivators to influence visitation decisions.

Increasing the capacity and quality of Port Stephens tourism infrastructure is essential if we are to continue to grow visitation to the destination and to remain competitive.

“

- Port Stephens Koala Sanctuary
- Tomaree Coastal Walk
- Smart regions partnerships
- Accessible tourism infrastructure and experiences
- World Heritage Listed estuary and catchment
- Birubi Point Tourism Interchange.
- Implementation of the Tomaree Sports Complex masterplan
- Duplication of Nelson Bay Road
- Redevelopment of Shoal Bay Hospital site into a world-class lodge and cultural centre.
- Skywalk on Tomaree
- Tertiary education opportunities
- Large scale 4\* + conference and meeting facilities
- Marine Discovery Centre
- More direct air access
- Investment in public infrastructure, facilities and services
- Rejuvenation of Nelson Bay and Raymond Terrace town centres
- Port Stephens Art Gallery
- Increased investment in events
- Restoration of Fingal Bay Lighthouse

# THE PRIORITIES

## STRATEGIC PRIORITY 1 **GROW BRAND PORT STEPHENS**

To define and build a new brand architecture and guidelines to build destination awareness and appeal.

A brand is the set of expectations, memories, stories and relationships that, taken together, account for a consumer's decision to choose one product or service over another. An effective brand is at the heart of a successful visitor destination. Many destinations fail to reach their desired potential because their brand positioning is too generic, particularly in such a dynamic and competitive environment.

Port Stephens already has demonstrable strong destination branding. The challenges are to improve brand awareness to the number one regional destination in NSW and importantly, to broaden consumers' perception and understanding of the brand beyond a beach and coastal destination; in other words, brand depth.

Destination Port Stephens needs to firstly identify what the brand represents, what, in essence, is unique and special about this destination, what sets it apart from a crowded coastline of "pristine waters, white sandy beaches and humpback whales".

Through consultation and collaboration we need to define and build a brand story and create a distinct value proposition to promote Port Stephens in key visitor source markets.

In partnership with members, our community and Council, Port Stephens' brand essence and key messaging will cut through the clutter and entice the world to see what they are missing. Port Stephens will be the most enviable destination to visit, work and live in.

### OBJECTIVES

- Define brand Port Stephens
- Create brand partners
- Build brand awareness







## STRATEGIC PRIORITY 2

# DRIVE DESTINATION MARKETING TO INCREASE VISITOR EXPENDITURE

Deliver innovative and targeted marketing programs to drive results.

Destination marketing is about growing visitor and community awareness and demand for the destination in line with the destination brand and all it represents.

One of the key drivers of success for DPS to date has been its ability to adapt to the rapidly changing tourism environment. Today travellers have more information and more choice. The expectations of consumers are higher and the ability to get real time reviews on tourism destinations and products will impact the whole travel experience from planning through to purchase.

Owned assets including social media channels, holiday club and the website provide an opportunity to engage directly with consumers to create

loyal brand ambassadors.

More than 90% of visitation to Port Stephens is sourced from domestic markets. Sydney accounts for 57% of domestic visitors with relatively small numbers from interstate markets. Domestic marketing will continue to be the primary focus of the organisation however, a more targeted approach is required to drive results.

Partnerships with Destination NSW and key distribution partners will ensure marketing campaigns leverage investment, create new opportunities for members and deliver a more effective return on investment for all stakeholders.

### OBJECTIVES

- Embrace digital like no other
- Target marketing toward priority growth markets
- Increase yield across Port Stephens





## STRATEGIC PRIORITY 3

# BUILD DEEP STAKEHOLDER RELATIONSHIPS

**Foster strong relationships with the community, business and government.**

A critical factor for the long terms sustainability of DPS will be the development of strong relationships across the visitor economy. By promoting the benefits of the healthy and vibrant visitor economy, DPS can engage the community and tourism industry to support the development of partnerships outside the traditional tourism networks.

Creating opportunity for members to grow their business through cooperative marketing , networking and education will continue to be a focus.

Strategic marketing partnerships will help support

destination marketing programs whilst building on a shared vision and shared brand. Cross regional collaborations will ensure a more integrated approach to domestic and international marketing programs and provide “bigger bang for our buck”.

A strong relationship with Port Stephens Council will remain central to achieving these goals. DPS will continue to work closely with Council to ensure the delivery of relevant actions within the Community Strategic Plan and build positive economic and social outcomes across the LGA.



### OBJECTIVES

- **Provide leadership and innovation across the visitor economy**
- **Engage the community to make tourism everybody’s business**
- **Inform decision making with data, research and insights**





## STRATEGIC PRIORITY 4

# SUPPORT BIG EVENTS AND BIG IDEAS

### Drive investment in infrastructure, events and place making

With increasing competition from domestic and international destinations, Port Stephens needs to keep ahead of the game. DPS will advocate for projects that will propel Port Stephens forward; investment, innovative place making projects and events that drive visitor spend and grow brand awareness will be a key focus.

By creating or enticing big events and festivals that fit the brand story, the environment and visitor demographics, DPS will not only increase visitation and build reputation, but will also increase expenditure, support seasonality issues, increase repeat visitation and strengthen

regional awareness. They can also provide the stimulus for additional infrastructure development and build community pride.

DPS will work on behalf of members and in partnership with stakeholders and to lobby for investment in game-changing projects to deliver on the potential Port Stephen's visitor economy.



### OBJECTIVES

- Lobby for investment in game changing projects
- Drive demand through event attraction and marketing
- Support strategies to create a vibrant destination

Destination  
Port Stephens  
*P.S. I love you*<sub>xx</sub>

STRATEGIC PLAN **2018-2021**