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Conversation continues for Western Sydney tourism

Western Sydney tourism businesses continued the conversation about how to work together towards a future that included millions more visitors at the second Talking Tourism combined networking event on Wednesday [November 8].

Held at the Crowne Plaza Hawkesbury Valley in Windsor, businesses were again urged to prepare for the opening of Western Sydney International (WSI) airport at the end of 2026.

Hosted by Blue Mountains Tourism (BMT) in partnership with Penrith Valley Chamber of Commerce, the event attracted almost 50 people including from Scenic World, Shelton-Lea B&B, Carrington Hotel, Western Sydney Mums, Mercure Penrith, Narrow Escape Rooms, Wild Cat Conservation Centre, Hawkesbury District Agricultural Association and Southern Cross Kayaking.

Representatives from Blue Mountains, Hawkesbury, Penrith and Wollondilly councils also attended.

All tourism-interested businesses, agents, stakeholders and investors in throughout Western Sydney International region were invited.

WSI external affairs and communication, corporate affairs manager Catherine Payne said Australia's only 24/7 airport and the country's first new one in more than 70 years was expected to service an initial 4 million passengers in its first year and 80 million a year by 2060.

“It's hard to get your head around those numbers and it might seem like a long way off, but we all know how time goes.”

Not only would WSI provide huge local employment opportunities, WSI would connect Western Sydney to the world.

It would be a gateway to the nation for leisure, medical, education and business travellers, as well as those visiting friends and relatives in one of the most culturally diverse regions in Australia.

With more visitors basing themselves in Western Sydney and taking daytrips to Sydney, the airport would change the way surrounding regions operated, Ms Payne said.

“With only three years until the airport is finished, it’s a defining time for tourism, and it takes the people in this room and your colleagues and competitors and tourism across Western Sydney to come together and make it happen.

“Get on with it because it is coming.”

Blue Mountains Tourism president Jason Cronshaw said: “It really doesn’t matter anymore where people are going to stay. Traditionally, we used to fight between our regions when people came for a day with us or to stay overnight because they were coming from the [Sydney] CBD.

“We need to all work together to ensure that our region becomes an exceptional region where they can land here, stay here, play here and do more things for more people more often ... for all of us to win from what’s about to happen with this airport opens.”

Penrith Chamber president Richard Fox acknowledged some of the businesses and entities that had funded the collaborative efforts so far: Penrith Panthers, Penrith Valley Chamber, BMT, Scenic World, Sydney Motorsports Park, Western Sydney Lakes and Accor Group.

The recent state and federal elections, the looming WSI open date and the growing momentum of development and infrastructure growth in the region provided the impetus for tourism businesses to collaborate across traditional competition boundaries.

“We have got to keep this going so we all benefit as a collective.”

Hawkesbury businesses also shared with industry about the products and services they provided and collaborations they had already formed, including Ashley Miskelly (Sea Urchin Science Centre and Gallery at Kurrajong), Shane McLaughlin (Hillbilly Cider at Bilpin), Nick and Ally Ayres (Karu Distillery at Richmond) and Ben Britton and Kahlia Angus (Wild Cat Conservation Centre at Wilberforce).

Crowne Plaza Hawkesbury Valley business development director Kai Adamson said the hotel worked with as many local businesses as possible.

A local industry leader, the property would continue to “scream out loud and share the love that we have for our region”.

“There's no one else that's going to do it for us.”

Macquarie Federal MP Susan Templeman, whose electorate spans the Hawkesbury and Blue Mountains, said while the region was not as well-known as it should be, balance was key.

She encouraged businesses to educate themselves about the airport and ask questions, raise concerns and give feedback while there was opportunity to do so.

“It’s going to take all of us working together to have a vision for what we need, [and] to know what to ask me for” such as advocacy for upgrades to the Blue Mountains train line to make it easier for visitors to access the area.

“Unless we start talking about it, no one's going to do anything about it.”

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