



*Love the lake*

**DRAFT**  
LAKE MACQUARIE CITY  
**DESTINATION MANAGEMENT**  
**PLAN 2022-2026**  
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

We remember and respect the Ancestors who cared for and nurtured this Country.

*Dhumaan ngayin ngarrakalu kirraanan barayidin.*

It is in their footsteps that we travel these lands and waters.

*Ngarrakalumba yuludaka bibayilin barayida baaduka.*

Lake Macquarie City Council acknowledges the Awabakal people and Elders past, present and future.

*Lake Macquarie City Council dhumaan Awabakala ngarrakal yalawaa, yalawan, yalawanan.*

Wording by the Aboriginal Reference Group and translated by Miromaa Aboriginal Language and Technology Centre.

Prepared by **Jenny Rand & Associates** in association with **Lake Macquarie Tourism**

### ENQUIRIES

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June 2022 © Lake Macquarie City Council

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## MESSAGE FROM THE MAYOR

Lake Macquarie is spoilt for natural assets. Australia's largest permanent coastal saltwater lake, 32 kilometres of pristine coastline and the vast green expanse of the Watagan Mountains are among the natural features of our City, loved and lauded by locals and visitors alike.

As a tourism destination we are attractive, welcoming, affordable and easily accessible to those living within Australia's largest population catchment. The same qualities that lure people here to live are those that attract visitors: the opportunity to escape the rat race; relax and unwind in glorious outdoor settings; or spend quality time with family and friends in the easy, hospitable environment of our town centres and villages.

These attributes bring more than one million tourists to Lake Macquarie each year. Most of them are domestic tourists, but the City's delights are gaining growing recognition within the international market as well, driven by favourable word-of-mouth reviews and exposure gained from the hosting of large-scale events, such as the International Children's Games.

Tourism is an important part of our economy and will play an increasing role as Lake Macquarie continues to diversify and capitalise on the opportunities presented by our superb natural environment, growing number of cultural, sporting and adventure tourism attractions, and our proximity to the international gateway of Sydney.

This Destination Management Plan will help us identify and grasp those opportunities, to package the unique qualities of Lake Macquarie and market them nationally and internationally.

It will provide a blueprint to grow existing markets and further expand our visitor economy, using innovative marketing methods and harnessing the persuasive power of social media to tell our story to the world.

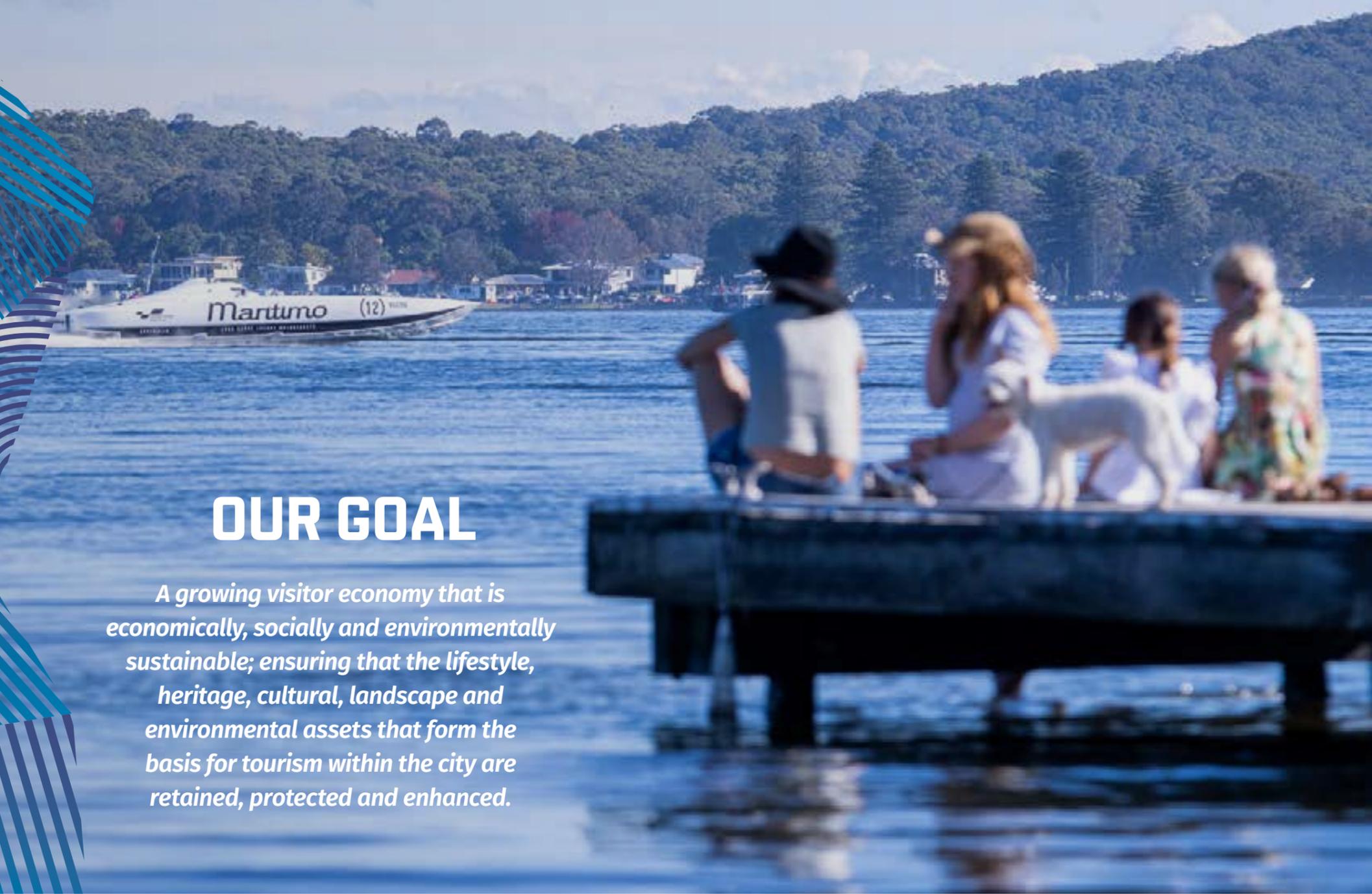
There are exciting times ahead. As our brand mantra suggests, there are endless reasons for tourists to Love the Lake.

**Councillor Kay Fraser**  
Mayor



## OUR GOAL

*A growing visitor economy that is economically, socially and environmentally sustainable; ensuring that the lifestyle, heritage, cultural, landscape and environmental assets that form the basis for tourism within the city are retained, protected and enhanced.*



# OUR VISION FOR LAKE MACQUARIE CITY BY 2032

*Lake Macquarie is a vibrant, contemporary, cosmopolitan coastal city. Tourism is thriving with the city attracting more than 2.5 million visitors a year.*

Lake Macquarie is the heart of our destination. Linked by a ferry service, tourism precincts and marine hubs on the eastern and western shores providing focal points for lake tours and charters, boat and water craft hire, and lakeside dining. The lake foreshore reserves provide a myriad of experiences – forested headlands, white sandy beaches, idyllic picnic spots, sculpture and art installations, and unique heritage precincts. With improved access to the Swansea Channel, Lake Macquarie is a ‘must explore’ destination for ocean-going yachts, cruisers and fishing boats. It is also a premier destination for water sports and events – home to the iconic Super Boats and Float Your Boat events and the national Sailing School of Excellence. Lake Macquarie Airport, on the eastern shore is ‘top of mind’ for visitors seeking airborne thrills.

The iconic Coastal Walk showcases our stunning coastline. Extending from Whitebridge to Belmont Lagoon, the Belmont Wetlands Conservation Area is an eco-tourism destination, with boutique accommodation; a network of interpretative walking,

cycling and mountain biking trails; and eco, heritage and cultural activities, tours and experiences. Further south, Catherine Hill Bay celebrates its mining heritage with the iconic jetty retained and reused and forming part of a unique dive trail.

With the realisation of the Trinity Point, Cedar Mill, Black Rock Motor Sports Complex, Wangi Power Station and Toronto foreshore projects, coupled with the new Awaba Conservation Area and enhancement of the Morisset and Rathmines areas, the western side of Lake Macquarie has become a popular, high-profile visitor destination. Along the western edge of the city, the rural areas provide boutique agritourism experiences, with the Watagan Ranges home to a range of outdoor, nature and adventure based activities including internationally renowned mountain bike trails.

Lake Macquarie’s heritage is recognised, valued and protected, providing the community and visitors with a sense of living history and a physical link to the work and way of life of earlier generations. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture is celebrated,

with the traditional custodians providing a range of ‘on-country’ experiences. Arts are flourishing with Lake Macquarie leading the way in creativity and innovation.

Visitors gravitate to our diverse, well presented town and village centres for boutique and lifestyle shopping and dining experiences; to socialise and soak-up the lifestyle. Investment in the night-time economy has paid dividends with vibrant dining and entertainment precincts and innovative creative and performing arts experiences.

The events sector is booming with a diverse calendar of festivals, celebrations and activities. Quality sporting facilities and outdoor assets attract international, national, state and regional sporting events while state-of-the art conference and meeting facilities and quality accommodation underpin Lake Macquarie as a destination for business events.



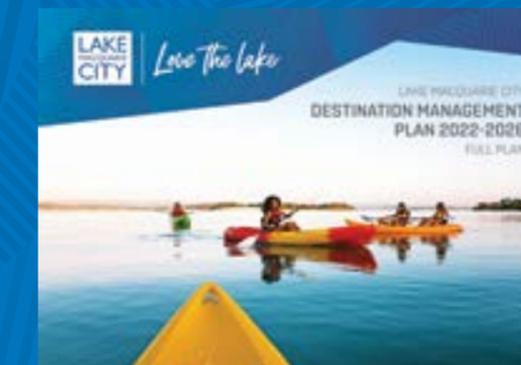


# STRUCTURE

The DMP is presented in three documents:



**Executive summary:** Provides an overview of the strategic framework, strategies and actions to grow and support city's visitor economy.



**Destination Management Plan:** assesses the current status of the city's visitor economy, identifies opportunities and provides the strategic framework, strategies and action to grow and support the city's visitor economy.



**Resource Document:** destination analysis information and statistics used in the preparation of the DMP.

# OUTCOMES BEING SOUGHT



## DESTINATION MANAGEMENT PLAN INITIATIVES TO DELIVER:

- a growing visitor economy that is economically, socially and environmentally sustainable; ensuring that the lifestyle, heritage, cultural, landscape and environmental assets that form the basis for tourism within the city are retained and protected
- a range of quality attractions, activities and experiences that will increase the appeal and competitiveness of Lake Macquarie as a destination
- the infrastructure, facilities and services needed to facilitate and support growth
- a higher profile and increased awareness of the city
- increased public and private sector investment in appropriate and sustainable tourism products and facilities

COUNCILS CORE OBJECTIVE  
**OUR CITY IS A POPULAR DESTINATION WITH A WIDE VARIETY OF EXPERIENCES**

LAKE MACQUARIE CITY COUNCIL COMMUNITY STRATEGIC PLAN

**TOURISM HAS EXTRAORDINARY POTENTIAL TO DRIVE INVESTMENT, JOBS AND BUILD THE CITY'S PROFILE**

DANTIA LAKE MACQUARIE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

## TARGETS BY 2032



**2.5M – 3.9M visitors**



**800,000 overnight visitors**



**1.9M visitor nights**



**1.7M day visitors**



**\$583M+ visitor expenditure**

# STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

The strategic priorities are designed to drive and support growth of the city's visitor economy.

## 1 THE POTENTIAL OF KEY LOCALITIES IS REALISED

In addition to the work already being undertaken by Council in key visitor precincts, realise the potential of Lake Macquarie (the waterbody and foreshores), Belmont Wetlands State Park and surrounds, Catherine Hill Bay, Lake Macquarie Airport, Lake Arts Precinct – Booragul, Speers Point, Teralba, Rathmines, Wangi Wangi - Awaba Conservation Area (proposed).

## 2 OUTDOOR, ADVENTURE AND NATURE-BASED ATTRACTIONS AND ACTIVITIES ARE EXPANDED AND ENHANCED

Consolidate and strengthen Lake Macquarie's positioning as an outdoor, adventure and nature-based destination by enhancing and expanding key attractions and activities, value-adding and packaging. Focus areas include National Parks, State Conservation Areas and Nature Reserves, State Forests, walking bushwalking, sailing, cycling, mountain biking, paddling, rock sports, golf and motor sports.

## 3 A CONTEMPORARY, VIBRANT CITY

Continue to transition Lake Macquarie into a contemporary vibrant city, offering a diversity of heritage, arts and cultural attractions and experiences, quality events and a strong night-time economy. The focus for product development is on place-making, activation and storytelling; public art and lighting installations; performing arts; Aboriginal experiences and growing the night-time economy.

## 4 EVENTS AS A DRIVER OF VISITATION

Continue to use events to drive visitation, focusing on increasing visitation during the shoulder and low seasons; shape the city's identity, generate publicity and build awareness.

## 5 THE INFRASTRUCTURE, FACILITIES & SERVICES TO ENABLE & SUPPORT GROWTH ARE IN PLACE

Ensuring that the city's infrastructure, facilities and services have the capacity to facilitate and support growth in the visitor economy and meet the needs and expectations of visitors.

## 6 INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT – BUILD SKILLS AND CAPACITY

Build skills and capacity within the tourism and hospitality sectors.

## 7 GROW AND DIVERSIFY THE MARKET BASE

Focusing on building existing markets; Outdoor – Adventure under 45s – activity and special interest markets; leveraging events and cultural programs to grow the regional day trip market; developing the accessible/inclusive tourism markets; and as suitable new accommodation and venues become available – launching Lake Macquarie as a destination for business events.

# OUR DESTINATION



## OUR OFFER

Lake Macquarie City is a vibrant coastal destination with magnificent natural assets that provide a distinct sense of place and support a broad range of quality outdoors, adventure and nature-based activities.

# OUR PRIMARY ATTRACTIONS

Lake Macquarie is the heart of our destination. Lake Macquarie is the largest permanent coastal saltwater lake in the southern hemisphere and one of the best locations in Australia for sailing. Commercial activities on the lake include jet boats, charter fishing, charter yachts, seaplanes, boat and other watercraft hire, cruises and tours.



32 kilometres of coastline – with stunning beaches, headland lookouts, coastal national parks and reserves and sea caves.



An extensive network of walking, cycling and paddling trails including the iconic Fernleigh Awabakal Shared Track (FAST), Red Bluff Board Walk and the Warners Bay foreshore shared pathway and sculpture trail.



Watagan Mountains National Parks and State Forests – with the mountains popular for camping, bushwalking, picnicking, horse-riding, rock sports and 4WD.



Lake Macquarie Airport – a hub for aviation tourism and air-borne adventures.



Lake Macquarie Museum of Art and Culture yapang – a contemporary art museum, sculpture garden and cafe with extensive views over Lake Macquarie.



Speers Point Park – anchored by the new Multi-Arts Pavilion mima and the Variety Playground, the largest all-abilities playground in Australia.

A diverse calendar of events including Float Your Boat, Living Smart Festival, Fast and Loud Festival, Let's Fish Lake Macquarie and Loop the Lake charity cycling event.



Underpinning these attractions is a growing base of arts and cultural attractions and experiences, a diversity of sport and recreation facilities, quality shopping and dining and a broad range of commercial activities including horse riding, karting, paintball, archery, virtual reality experiences, 10 pin bowling, trampolining and ice skating.

Lake Macquarie has a diverse range of accommodation and venues.

# OUR BRAND AND POSITIONING



## Love the lake

### ESSENCE

“Love the Lake”  
Lake Macquarie at the heart of our destination.

### VALUES

Genuine, Welcoming, Inclusive  
Passionate about and appreciative of our beautiful setting and our relaxed, coastal lifestyle.

### PERSONALITY

Adventurous, fun-loving,  
active, creative,  
un-pretentious.

### CUSTOMER BENEFITS

**Close to home:** only 90 minutes from Sydney, 30 minutes from Newcastle, less than an hour from the Central Coast and Hunter LGAs

**Reconnect:** with family, friends and nature

**Escape:** try a sea change, relax, re-charge and chill-out

**Have an adventure:** explore, discover and challenge yourself.

### KEY ATTRIBUTES

**Stunning setting:** spectacular coastline, glistening healthy lake, rugged mountains, National Parks, State Conservation Areas and State Forests.

**So much to do:** a multitude of outdoor, adventure and cultural attractions and activities.

**Hidden gems:** sea caves, white sand islands, moss walls, rainforest, mountain creeks.

**Rich culture and heritage:** creative, innovative arts scene.

**Vibrant City:** Great events, diverse shopping and contemporary dining

**Accessible, Affordable.**

## VALUE OF TOURISM



**\$550.242M**  
OUTPUT



**\$266.032M**  
IN VALUE-ADD



SECTOR ACCOUNTS FOR  
**2.6 PER CENT**  
OF THE CITY'S TOTAL OUTPUT AND  
VALUE-ADD



**1,617**  
TOURISM BUSINESSES



**2917**  
JOBS (4.6 PER CENT OF  
JOBS WITHIN THE CITY)<sup>1</sup>

Tourism brings 'new' dollars into the local economy with these dollars having a multiplier effect. This contributes to the sustainability and resilience of local businesses.

<sup>1</sup> REMPLAN: Tourism Profile Lake Macquarie City: based on ABS 2016 Census Place of Work Employment (Scaled), ABS 2016 / 2017 National Input Output Tables, ABS June 2019 Gross State Product, and ABS 2018 / 2019 Tourism Satellite Account.



## OUTLOOK - THE CHANGING PRODUCT AND INFRASTRUCTURE BASE

Lake Macquarie City Council has a multitude of projects in the development pipeline that will diversify and strengthen the city's offer and facilitate growth in visitation and expenditure. Major projects include the Cedar Mill Entertainment complex (30,000 people capacity), Black Rock Motor Sports Park, Cooranbong Adventure and Eco Tourism Retreat and the Trinity Point Marina Hotel and Conference Centre.

In addition, Council is implementing initiatives that will improve visitor facilities and experiences and/or provide opportunities to grow visitation, support local business, and/or stimulate private sector investment. These initiatives include:

- developing a vibrant evening and night-time economy, with a focus on strategic locations throughout the city
- strengthening the city's arts and cultural experiences through on-going implementation of contemporary and innovative cultural and creative experiences across visual arts, performance and live music, heritage and museums
- growing the events and festivals market, through the implementation of Council's Events and Festivals Strategy and investment in large and mass-participation events
- activating Lake Macquarie and foreshore areas, including developing tourism hubs around the lake, providing accessible swimming enclosures along the western side of the lake, improving infrastructure to support events, upgrading marine infrastructure, and arts and cultural activation of the foreshore areas
- implementing the foreshore master plans for Toronto and Rathmines, which will improve the presentation, connectivity and recreation and visitor facilities, consolidating these areas as visitor attractions
- implementing the streetscaping plans in each of the town centres which will improve their presentation, vibrancy and appeal
- improving the Swansea Channel – Council is in discussions with Transport for NSW and other agencies regarding improving the depth and safety of the Swansea Channel, which will enable Lake Macquarie to tap into the touring yacht and motor cruiser markets, increase the appeal of the city as a boating and fishing destination, facilitate ocean-going events, and encourage out-of-area boat owners to store or moor their boats at Lake Macquarie
- improving access and facilities for people with disabilities through the implementation of Council's Disability Inclusion Plan and initiatives with the development of accessible swimming enclosures, shared pathways and Lake Mac Holiday Park accommodation
- extending the shared pathway network, including the completion of the lake foreshore cycleway from Belmont to Morisset, and the cycleway from Morisset to Cooranbong – with the potential for a link to the Awaba Mountain Bike Park to improve tourism outcomes
- progressively updating wayfinding signage throughout the city.

# STRENGTHS AND STRATEGIC ASSETS

Lake Macquarie's strengths and strategic assets that will support and provide opportunities for growth in the visitor economy include:

## STRENGTHS ASSETS TO WORK WITH

Location/ Proximity

**Proximity to major population centres:**

- Readily accessible from Sydney, Central Coast and Hunter with around 6.17 million people living within 2.5 hours drive of Lake Macquarie
- Population forecast to increase by 2.6+ million over the next 20 years

**Proximity to high profile locations/destinations:**

- Central Coast
- Newcastle
- Hunter Valley
- Port Stephens

Highly accessible

**Road**

- M1 Motorway – direct link to Sydney, connecting with the motorway/ orbital road network in Sydney providing access to all Sydney regions
- M1 Motorway and Pacific Highway access to Central Coast, Newcastle and Port Stephens; arterial route to the NSW North Coast/Queensland
- Hunter Expressway/New England Highway – accessible to Cessnock, Maitland and upper Hunter LGAs; link to New England – North West; Golden Highway link to Central NSW
- Regional road links to Newcastle, Cessnock and Maitland LGAs

**Rail**

- Passenger rail services – part of the Sydney interurban and Hunter networks and North Coast line
- Located on the route of the proposed Very Fast Train

## STRENGTHS ASSETS TO WORK WITH

Highly accessible cont.

**Air - domestic and international gateways:**

- 30 minutes from Newcastle Airport – significant growth is forecast for both domestic and international passengers
- Within two hours of drive of Sydney International Airport and the new Western Sydney Airport
- Lake Macquarie Airport – charter flights
- Lake Macquarie – Sea Plane access

**Sea**

- Swansea Channel providing access to the lake for smaller yachts and motor boats
- 30 minutes from the Port of Newcastle Cruise berth

**Other regional links**

- Bus services, cycleways and shared pathways linking Lake Macquarie with some adjoining LGAs

Lake Macquarie

- Size and scale – largest permanent coastal saltwater lake in the Southern Hemisphere
- Physical characteristics – good water quality, diverse habitats, low tidal range, limited currents, wide deep central basin, sheltered bays, long fetches and reliable winds rendering the Lake highly suitable for sailing, boating and other on-water activities
- Stunning scenery/setting
- Supports a diverse range of on-water activities and events
- Marinas and marine infrastructure
- Commercial tourism operators – adventure, charters, boat and equipment hire and tours
- Extensive lakeside reserves and foreshore areas – supporting recreation and events
- Cultural and heritage sites around the lake foreshore and islands

## STRENGTHS ASSETS TO WORK WITH

Unique and diverse natural and outdoor assets

Unique and diverse natural assets that provide a stunning setting and distinct sense of place and support a range of tourism and recreational activities and events. Key assets include:

- Lake Macquarie – including Naru Beach and the white sand islands and the foreshore reserves
- coastline – including beaches, headlands, cliffs and sea caves
- coastal, lakeside and mountain National Parks, State Conservation Areas and Nature Reserves
- State Forests in the Watagan Mountains
- Council and Crown Reserves including the Belmont Wetlands State Park, Speers Point and Green Point
- cycleways and walking trails including the high-profile Fernleigh Track and Red Bluff Boardwalk.

Growing cluster of adventure-based operators and activities

- Air sports – including sky diving and aerobatics
- Jet Buzz – jet boat
- Boating, sailing and fishing charters and tours
- Cycling, mountain biking and gravel grinding
- Water sports/paddling
- Scuba diving
- Trail running
- Rock sports
- Black Rock Motor Park (proposed)

## STRENGTHS ASSETS TO WORK WITH

Sporting venues and facilities

- Experience in/good reputation for hosting large sporting events
- Quality sporting facilities with sufficient scale to attract tournaments with large numbers of participants, ideal for junior sport
- New venues coming online, e.g. Black Rock Motorsports Park and Newcastle Basketball Stadium
- Range of localities (beaches, lake, forests, airport) suitable for niche sporting events like adventure racing and trail running
- Proximity to Newcastle and ability to host cross-LGA events
- Good access and affordable accommodation
- Growing number of facilities/venues for adaptive/inclusive sports

Large and/or under-performing sites potentially suitable for a range of tourism and recreation activities

Including:

- Belmont Wetland – Jewells Swamp – Belmont Lagoon precinct
- Catherine Hill Bay precinct
- Historic Wangi Power Station
- Rathmines
- former colliery sites
- Crown land between Toronto and Awaba (including the proposed Awaba Conservation Area)
- land adjacent to the Royal Motor Yacht Club, Toronto
- Catherine Hill Bay Jetty.

Future: Decommissioned power station sites

# ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

Addressing challenges and removing barriers is fundamental to delivering on-going and sustainable growth in the visitor economy. Issues and challenges faced by Lake Macquarie include:

ISSUE	CHALLENGES
Identify – confusion of ‘where is Lake Macquarie?’	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Addressing the confusion between Lake Macquarie and Port Macquarie, with search engines often listing Port Macquarie sites alongside Lake Macquarie sites</li> <li>Differentiating Lake Macquarie from Central Coast and Newcastle – Lake Macquarie is often seen as part of suburban corridor linking these two areas, with awareness of Newcastle and the Central Coast being significantly higher than that of Lake Macquarie</li> <li>Changing perceptions of the Hunter – the region is often referred to as Newcastle (the city) and the Hunter, with the Hunter perceived as being ‘Wine Country’ and a rural destination, not coastal</li> <li>Raising the visibility of Lake Macquarie along the M1 Motorway</li> </ul>
Geography of the city (the barrier created by the lake) combined with a lack of a city centre, no high-profile tourism precinct; and the concentration of visitor facilities on the eastern side of the lake.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Evolving lakeside centres into strong tourism precincts</li> <li>Encouraging visitor dispersal around the lake – raising the profile and visibility of the attractions and activities on the western side of the lake</li> <li>Attracting investment in accommodation on the western side of the lake to support projects such as Cedar Mill</li> <li>Managing traffic congestion on the road link (Esplanade - Macquarie Drive – Croudace Bay Road) between the eastern and western side of the lake</li> </ul>
Strong population growth in the Lower Hunter and Central Coast region is placing increasing pressure on facilities and infrastructure in Lake Macquarie. This will be compounded by population growth within Lake Macquarie, the surrounding region and the Greater Sydney Region.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Managing assets - residents of the Lower Hunter and Central Coast regions are increasing looking to localities in Lake Macquarie for outdoor recreation and leisure activities, resulting in increased use of and pressure on the beaches, coastal and lakeside reserves, National Parks, State Forests and Conservation Areas, and popular precincts such as Warners Bay</li> <li>Managing the interface between natural and urban areas to minimise conflict between residents and visitors, protect the natural environment, and address issues such as traffic and parking</li> <li>Finding additional funds and resources to assist Council, NPWS, Forestry Corporation of NSW and other land and water management agencies to manage increasing visitation</li> <li>Managing the anti-social behaviour of a small minority of visitors to minimise environmental impacts and protect the amenity and reputation of the area</li> </ul>

ISSUE	CHALLENGES
Increasing competition from LGAs surrounding Sydney and the Lower Hunter – with increased focus on outdoors, adventure and nature-based tourism as well as the development of commercial tours, activities and experiences.	<p>Differentiating Lake Macquarie in an increasingly competitive market:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Shellharbour and Wollongong south of Sydney and Central Coast, Port Stephens and Mid Coast have similar environments (coast, lake/harbour, hinterland and ranges) to Lake Macquarie and are actively building their outdoor, adventure and nature-based products and experiences.</li> <li>Cessnock, Maitland, Singleton and Upper Hunter LGAs are diversifying their traditional product offer by leveraging their natural assets to grow outdoor, nature and adventure-based activities.</li> <li>Shellharbour and Cessnock LGAs have air sports operators and are actively promoting aviation-based adventure experiences.</li> <li>Dungog Shire is a popular destination for mountain biking, cycling, bush camping, bushwalking and 4WD-trail bike touring, an alternative to the Watagans.</li> </ul>
Seasonality – strong summer peak with visitation concentrated on weekends.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Growing shoulder and off-season visitation, particularly mid-week.</li> </ul>
Accommodation constraints:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Addressing capacity constraints to facilitate growth of the events sector</li> <li>Stopping leakage to branded/corporate hotel properties in surrounding LGAs, particularly for the business travel, conferences and meetings and high-yield markets.</li> <li>Managing and leveraging short-term rental properties (AirBnB, Stayz etc.).</li> <li>Attracting investment in new accommodation.</li> <li>Meeting the growing demand for caravan, RV and camping sites.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>limited number of branded hotels/resorts and larger properties</li> <li>tired/dated budget to mid-market motels</li> <li>loss of caravan park accommodation</li> <li>limited sites for large RVs</li> <li>very limited accommodation on the western side of the lake.</li> </ul>	

# STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

ISSUE	CHALLENGES
Lake Macquarie not achieving its full potential.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attractions and activities are dispersed – there are no marine tourism hubs</li> <li>• Significantly improving the safety of the Swansea Channel to accommodate ocean-going vessels</li> <li>• Removing barriers (including red-tape) to the utilisation of the lake and foreshore areas for a broad range of activities, including commercial activities</li> </ul> <p>Attracting public and private sector investment in marine infrastructure (e.g. additional moorings, marinas, jetties and pontoons)</p>
Limited non-natural attractions, dining precincts and evening and night time economies.	This is being addressed by Council through the implementation of its arts, cultural, heritage and night-time economy strategies
Aging infrastructure and facilities, particularly in the beach and lake foreshore reserves/ degraded areas	Finding the funds to replace and maintain aging infrastructure and facilities, improve presentation and address issues such as weed control, illegal dumping and vandalism
Limited/ineffective wayfinding, tourist attraction and facility signage.	Improving signage throughout the city
Lack of a large conference and performing arts centre.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gaining traction in the business events market without a high-profile venue</li> </ul> <p>Competition from venues in the surrounding region</p>
Bringing potential development sites online.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consolidating sites which are in multiple ownership</li> <li>• Cost of rehabilitating sites (e.g. removing contamination, mine grouting) to enable sites to be developed</li> <li>• Cost of providing enabling infrastructure (e.g. road, power)</li> </ul> <p>Ensuring that the potential for tourism and recreation are taken into consideration in the assessment and planning of these sites</p>



# STRATEGIC PRIORITY 1

## 1. THE POTENTIAL OF KEY LOCALITIES IS REALISED

Lake Macquarie City Council is investing significantly in enhancing and activating the key visitor precincts of Warners Bay, Speers Point, Booragul and the Belmont and Toronto foreshores. Charlestown town centre is also being enhanced and the area activated and Council is progressively implementing streetscape master plans for each of the town centres, as well as heritage conservation master plan for West Wallsend and Teralba. These initiatives will increase the appeal of these localities and encourage visitation.

In addition to the work already being undertaken by Council in key visitor precincts, other localities that have the potential to become more significant visitor precincts are:

- Lake Macquarie (the waterbody and foreshores)
- Belmont Wetlands State Park and surrounds
- Catherine Hill Bay
- Lake Macquarie Airport
- Lake Arts Precinct – Booragul, Speers Point, Teralba
- Rathmines
- Wangi Wangi - Awaba Conservation Area (proposed).

### STRATEGIES

- 1.1 Continue to enhance and activate town centres and Toronto and Belmont foreshore precincts
- 1.2 Further Activate Lake Macquarie – the waterway and foreshore reserves, including implementing the Lake Activation Strategy, establishing marine hubs, improving the Swansea Channel and planning to leverage the Channel when it is improved
- 1.3 Develop the Belmont Wetlands State Park – Jewells Swamp – Belmont Lagoon corridor into a major tourism and recreation precinct
- 1.4 Develop the Catherine Hill Bay area into a high-end boutique coastal destination; preserving and adaptively re-using the historic jetty, establishing boutique accommodation, and developing walking, cycling and dive trails
- 1.5 Support the ongoing development of Lake Macquarie Airport as a tourism aviation hub
- 1.6 Continue to develop and activate the Lake Arts Precinct, strengthening the links between the Museum of Art and Culture yampang, Awaba House, Teralba, Multi Arts Pavilion mima and Speers Point; and further enhancing the precinct through art installations, landscaping and improved signage
- 1.7 Develop Rathmines foreshore into a major attraction and visitor activity hub for the western side of the Lake, implementing the master plan, improving interpretation and expanding the range of accessible activities and facilities within the region
- 1.8 Build the Wangi Wangi – Awaba area into a key visitor precinct; advocating for tourist accommodation, attractions, actions and facilities to be included in the adaptive re-use of the Historic Wangi Power Station and the development of the proposed Awaba Conservation Area

# STRATEGIC PRIORITY 2



## 2. OUTDOOR, ADVENTURE AND NATURE-BASED ATTRACTIONS AND ACTIVITIES ARE EXPANDED AND ENHANCED

Since 2019, the focus has been on leveraging the city's outdoor, adventure and nature-based assets to build the 'under 45 years, adventure-seeker' market. In addition to building this market, the marketing and promotion undertaken has also stimulated growth in other market segments including the family market, short breaks, active over 55s and day trippers from the surrounding region.

There are significant opportunities to further enhance some of the city's outdoor attractions, value-add and package and/or to grow both activity-based events. Growth needs to occur with a framework that protects assets and minimises conflict between user groups and between residents and visitors.

This DMP aims to consolidate and strengthen Lake Macquarie's positioning as an outdoor, adventure and nature-based destination by enhancing and expanding key attractions and activities, value-adding and packaging.

### STRATEGIES

- |      |   |
|------|---|
| 2.1  | Improve access to and visitor facilities within National Parks, State Conservation Areas and Nature Reserves; adopting an integrated approach to the urban-park interface and advocating for improvements in visitor facilities and walking trails  |
| 2.2  | Advocate for improved access to and visitor facilities and attractions within State Forests   |
| 2.3  | Continue to improve and expand walking and bushwalking experiences; improving directional and track head signage and progress the planning  |
| 2.4  | Position Lake Macquarie as the 'sailing capital of Australia'; establishing the Sailing School of Excellence; become a specialist centre for wind, kite foiling and adaptive sailing and activities; and build a strong calendar of sailing events  |
| 2.5  | Leverage opportunities to strengthen Lake Macquarie as a destination for cycling; extending and enhancing cycling trails, introducing cycle tours, leveraging cycling websites to promote cycling and completing the Coastal Cycleway   |
| 2.6  | Position Lake Macquarie and the Lower Hunter Region as a premier destination for mountain biking; developing the Awaba MTB Park into one of the top riding destinations in Australia; grow existing mountain biking events and attract additional events; build adaptive mountain biking and establish new sanctioned trails at strategic locations within the city |
| 2.7  | Continue to expand and promote paddling opportunities; expanding and improving paddling activities, facilities and infrastructure and hosting paddling events   |
| 2.8  | Diversify the city's rock sports 'offer' to include bouldering  |
| 2.9  | Leverage golfing opportunities; targeting the social golf market and growing golf events  |
| 2.10 | Develop the motorsports on land and sea; growing motor and speed-related events and packaging adventure-based activities  |



## STRATEGIC PRIORITY 3

### 3. A CONTEMPORARY, VIBRANT CITY

Council is implementing a range of place-making, heritage, arts and cultural strategies focused on transitioning Lake Macquarie into a contemporary, vibrant city offering a diversity of heritage, arts and cultural attractions and experiences, quality events and a strong night-time economy.

Key initiatives proposed in Council's various strategies and plans that will enhance Lake Macquarie as a visitor destination include:

- celebrating local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage and culture
- programs and activities at the Museum of Arts and Culture yapang and the Multi Arts Pavilion mima and adjoining parklands
- continued development of the Sculpture Park, the Creative LAKE sculpture trail and public art in strategic locations throughout the city
- place-making and activation of the town centres and key lake foreshore areas
- interpretation of heritage precincts and expansion of the museum and exhibition network
- temporary art and light-show installations
- food van hubs at strategic locations around the lake
- underwater sculpture park
- building the evening and night-time economies

Several of these initiatives are highly consistent with the 'Love the Lake' branding and will help to consolidate Lake Macquarie as the 'heart' of the city. An arts-cultural overlay of the key precincts around the lake will also help to strengthen the product and experience offered by the 'hop-on, hop-off' ferry service and encourage walking and cycling.

The recently launched 'Love the Lake – Culture Trails' visitor guide brings together the city's heritage sites, museums, galleries and public art installations and adds depth and diversity to the city's offering. It is also helping to build the identity of Lake Macquarie and to differentiate the city from the Central Coast.

The focus for product development is:

- place-making, activation and story-telling – town centres, historic precincts and key reserves
- temporary and permanent public art and light installations – both land and water-based
- building a reputation for leading-edge performing and visual art programs and activities
- working with the Aboriginal community to introduce 'on-country' experiences
- growing the evening and night-time economy.

#### STRATEGIES

- |     |  |
|-----|--|
| 3.1 | Support the development of Aboriginal tourism; encouraging initiatives from the Aboriginal community to deliver the Keeping Place and Awabakal Cultural Centre, provide on-country experiences and share and celebrate culture and stories |
| 3.2 | Enhance and activate key tourism precincts through creative experiences; including the innovative, adaptive re-use and interpretation of heritage sites, and art and lighting installations  |
| 3.3 | A strong and vibrant night-time economy; continue to build the night-time economy, with the focus being on clustered rather than dispersed development to create vibrant dining and entertainment precincts                                |
| 3.4 | Develop the city's museum experiences  |

# STRATEGIC PRIORITY 4



## 4. EVENTS AS A DRIVER OF VISITATION

Council will continue to use events to drive visitation, focusing on increasing visitation during the shoulder and low seasons; shape the city's identity, enhancing lifestyle, generating publicity and building awareness.

Lake Macquarie's strengths lie in community and sporting events. The city has a range of quality sporting venues and is very popular for junior regional and state sporting carnivals. The beaches, lake, National Parks and State Forests support a diversity of outdoor and adventure-based sporting events including surf lifesaving, surfing, sailing, cycling, mountain biking, trail running and adventure racing.

The city has a growing calendar of creative visual and performing arts events. The new Multi Arts Pavilion mima offers a high-tech creative canvas for contemporary art, including exhibitions, performances, workshops and large-scale multi-media productions.

The proposed Cedar Mill outdoor entertainment and event space (capacity 30,000 people) will enable the city to host large music concerts, festivals and outdoor exhibitions, while the proposed Black Rock Motor Park will attract a range of motor sports and related functions and events.

While able to cater for small to mid-size business events Lake Macquarie lacks the venues to attract larger business, entertainment and performing arts events. There are several proposed accommodation projects (see Table 4.1) that may provide medium to large conference facilities.

### COUNCIL'S VISION FOR EVENTS

To lead and facilitate the successful and professional delivery of meaningful, creative, quality events for our community and visitors.

Develop a vibrant annual calendar of contemporary and creative events and festivals in the city where people can meet, learn, celebrate and share experiences and new opportunities.

- Events and Festivals Strategy

### STRATEGIES

- |     |   |
|-----|---|
| 4.1 | Implement Council's Events and Festivals Strategy to provide a strong foundation for growth   |
| 4.2 | Remove constraints to growing existing events   |
| 4.3 | Establish/attract new events; continuing to build the sporting events sector, promoting Lake Macquarie and its venues and localities to event organisers and promoters and exploring opportunities to attract and host new events |
| 4.4 | Leverage opportunities afforded by venues in adjoining LGAs   |
| 4.5 | Partner with accommodation and venue operators to build the business event market   |
| 4.6 | Address gaps in supply; assess the feasibility of a large multi-purpose performing arts, entertainment and conference venue   |

# STRATEGIC PRIORITY 5



## 5. THE INFRASTRUCTURE, FACILITIES AND SERVICES NEEDED TO ENABLE AND SUPPORT GROWTH IN THE VISITOR ECONOMY ARE IN PLACE

Council will ensure that its infrastructure, facilities and services have the capacity to facilitate and support growth in the visitor economy and meet the needs and expectations of visitors. Visitor infrastructure is currently concentrated along the eastern edge of the city. With the accommodation projects proposed for the western and north-western areas of the city, infrastructure, facilities and services (e.g. information, signage, visitor facilities) will need to be augmented in these localities. There is a need for:

- additional accommodation, particularly quality branded hotel and serviced apartment properties
- a large conference and function centre
- expanded information services, including growth of the Tourism Ambassador Program
- upgraded and expanded marine infrastructure
- improved linkages between railway stations and visitor precincts
- improved mobile phone coverage in the west of the city
- increased access to electric vehicle charging stations
- rehabilitation and servicing of decommissioned mine and power station sites to release land for new development.

### STRATEGIES

- |     |   |
|-----|---|
| 5.1 | Improve, diversify and expand the accommodation sector; pursue opportunities to attract new accommodation including a high-end branded hotel; and upgrade and expand existing accommodation properties  |
| 5.2 | Increase access to visitor information; utilise mobile and kiosk information outlets and information directories at strategic locations; grow the Tourism Ambassador program; and continue to build Lake Macquarie's online presence  |
| 5.3 | Improve directional, facility and other tourism signage   |
| 5.4 | Upgrade and expand marine infrastructure implementing the marine infrastructure-related recommendations of the Lake Activation Strategy and continuing to work with TfNSW to deliver the marine infrastructure required to support growth in recreational boating and facilitate events |
| 5.5 | Facilitate growth in rail tourism leveraging rail access for large events; establishing strong walking and cycling links between railway stations and visitor activity nodes; and position and promote Lake Macquarie as a rail travel destination                                      |
| 5.6 | Cater for electric vehicles progressively implementing Council's Electric Vehicle Strategy  |
| 5.7 | Ensure mobile telephone services meet demand, particularly for large events   |
| 5.8 | Remediate former coal mine and power station sites ensuring the tourism and recreational potential of the decommissioned sites are assessed as part of the master planning process; and advocating for funding for mine grouting, rehabilitation and enabling infrastructure            |

# STRATEGIC PRIORITY 6 & 7



## 6. INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT – BUILD SKILLS AND CAPACITY WITHIN THE TOURISM AND HOSPITALITY SECTORS

The marketplace is evolving, and tourism and business operators need to keep abreast of changes. Tourism and hospitality businesses need to be highly active in the digital space, with this space used to communicate, build relationships, market and promote, and ‘make the sale’. Businesses also need to be responsive to changing needs and expectations, recognising that customers are becoming more sophisticated and demanding and less tolerant of inferior customer service.

Customers, particularly in the day trip and short-breaks market, are increasingly looking for ‘deals’ and promotional offers.

Tourism Australia and DNSW are seeking ‘export-ready’ products and experiences for the international visitor markets, with some of the products and experiences in Lake Macquarie ideal for the international adventure seeker market.

### STRATEGIES

- |     |  |
|-----|--|
| 6.1 | Build industry skills and capacity – working with operators to access training programs; enhance their online presence and become ‘export ready’ |
| 6.2 | Identify address labour and skills gaps  |
| 6.3 | Facilitate industry networking   |

## 7. GROW AND DIVERSIFY THE MARKET BASE

The focus for market growth and diversification will be on:

- outdoor – adventure – under 45 years market - niche and activity-based markets (e.g. surfers, mountain-bikers)
- growing existing primary markets
- leveraging events and cultural programs to drive visitation and grow the regional day trip market

- growing the accessible/inclusive tourism market, positioning Lake Macquarie as a destination for adaptive/accessible outdoor and adventure activities and events
- as suitable new accommodation and venues become available, launching Lake Macquarie as a destination for business events.

### STRATEGIES

- |     |  |
|-----|--|
| 7.1 | Strengthen and grow existing markets including continuing to focus on building the ‘Outdoor – Adventure – under 45 years’ market, implementing quarterly marketing campaigns and leveraging events and cultural programs |
| 7.2 | Diversify the market base growing the accessible/inclusive tourism and business event markets, and leveraging new developments to build new markets  |
| 7.3 | Continue to produce online and print-based marketing and promotional collateral  |

# MONITORING

Council will monitor the effectiveness of its tourism development and marketing activities to assist in:

- providing an indication of whether the strategies and actions are effective in building visitation and/or achieving economic growth, with ineffective actions terminated or modified
- setting priorities and allocating funds and resources
- providing data to support funding applications – particularly important where funding for the extension of an existing program is being sought.

Potential indicators include:

- progress of product and infrastructure development projects
- grant funding secured
- value of new/additional investment in the tourism facilities (accommodation, attractions, tours etc) within the city.
- number of tourism businesses retained and new business start-ups
- TRA visitor statistics – Hunter Region and Lake Macquarie profiles

- visitor statistics collected at the VIC and other information outlets
- tourism and event websites, social media and Book Easy analytics
- DNSW marketing campaign monitoring statistics
- media coverage gained (track amount of coverage and the dollar value)
- familiarisation tours hosted and the resultant coverage
- performance statistics from Lake Mac Holiday Parks and Morisset Showground
- performance statistics from Council-operated venues including Lake Macquarie Museum of Art and Culture yapang, Multi Arts Pavilion mima, theatres, museums, exhibition spaces and function and meeting spaces
- feedback from individual operators on visitation, occupancy rates, trends in turnover etc.

- growth in local events: number of locally organised events, number of attendees; tickets sold; attendee surveys; traffic surveys
- number of external events attracted to Lake Macquarie; number of participants and estimated room nights and expenditure generated and the extent and value of the media coverage; traffic surveys
- business/industry development activities held; the number of participants; and the outcomes achieved

For some initiatives, particularly in the areas of major projects, it may take several years before the results are fully realised.

# ABBREVIATIONS

4WD	Four-wheel driving (off road)
ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
BnB	Bed and Breakfast accommodation
DMP	Destination Management Plan
DNSW	Destination NSW
DNSSN	Destination Network Sydney Surrounds North
FCNSW	Forestry Corporation of NSW
LGA	Local Government Area
LMCC	Lake Macquarie City Council
LSPS	Local Strategic Planning Statement
MTB	Mountain Bike
NPWS	NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service
REDS	Regional Economic Development Strategy
RMS	Roads and Maritime Services
RV	Recreational Vehicle (e.g. motorhome, campervan)
TfNSW	Transport for NSW
TRA	Tourism Research Australia
VEIAP	Visitor Economy Industry Action Plan
VFR	Visiting Friends and Relatives
VIC	Visitor Information Centre
YE	Year Ending





*Love the lake*

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