

# Shoalhaven Tourism Master Plan 2012-2017

## Overview



### 1. INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 The Significance of the Tourism Sector

Shoalhaven City is the most visited Local Government Area in the NSW, outside of the Sydney Region. Traditionally tourism in the City has been based on the beach holiday, with this dating back to the late 1880's. The City is rich in coastal assets, National Parks and Forests. It also has some beautiful rural valleys and rich river country. The historic towns of Berry, Kangaroo Valley and Milton are popular for their setting, character and lifestyle attributes.

The Tourism sector is one of the major economic activities in Shoalhaven City. In the year ending June 2011, Shoalhaven City and Jervis Bay Territory combined, attracted an estimated 1.27 million visitors, comprising 1.232 million domestic and 38,000 international visitors who stayed one or more nights in the City as well as 1.247 million day visitors. These visitors spent an estimated \$678 million in the City, up 9.9% over the same period in 2009. The Tourism sector is also the major employer in the City, responsible for 7,870 direct and indirect jobs.

The Tourism Masterplan 2012 – 2017 will provide the framework for taking the industry forward for the next 5 years.

#### 1.2 Challenges Facing the City

- Australia-wide, the domestic tourism market is static, with minimal growth forecast for the next decade. Growing visitation to Shoalhaven City against this trend will require both product and market development and a more targeted approach to marketing and promotion.
- Seasonality – although seasonality has decreased in recent years, it remains a major challenge for the City.
- A marketplace in transition – with the City needing to continue to meet the needs of the older generations using traditional marketing techniques and promotional collateral, while moving into web / digital based marketing.
- Forty nine towns and villages each with different needs and expectations, and at different stages of development. The dispersed location is a major challenge.
- A highly fragmented industry, both spatially and within sectors, with limited engagement with or leadership from the Shoalhaven Tourism Board.
- Concentration of small operators, many of whom are lifestyle focused and have limited skills and resources.
- Widespread misconceptions about the 'Tourism Levy' and divergent opinions about what it should pay for and how it should be used.
- Under-staffed Tourism Unit within Council. With the current resources, the Tourism Unit can only maintain high-level destination and brand awareness marketing.
- Limited engagement with Shoalhaven Council's tourism staff by tourism operators.

## 1.3 Structure of the Plan

The Shoalhaven City Tourism Master Plan is presented as a number of recommendations, strategies and action plans designed to deliver the vision, objects and targets for tourism. The Master Plan is divided into two sections:

- **Destination Development and Management** – providing directions and actions for the development and management of product, infrastructure and services within the City.
- **Market and Industry Development and Marketing and Promotion** – setting the priorities and directions for marketing and promotion over the next five years.

The Plan is supported by a series of Appendices which provide more detailed information, statistics and the rationale on which the recommendations, strategies and actions are based.

## 1.4 Implementing the Plan

The Tourism Plan is the starting point for consolidating and growing the tourism sector within Shoalhaven City. It will take time, resources and commitment to implement the strategies and actions incorporated in this Plan. A number of the projects and actions listed in this Plan are 'aspirational' and are dependent on significant government and/or private sector development.

It is important to note that Shoalhaven City Council has limited funds and resources, with a significant proportion of its funds already pre-committed through Council's Community, Delivery and Operational Plans. It is likely to take time to have some of the projects identified in this Plan to be incorporated into Council's forward projections and works program. The Tourism Master Plan is the first step to having the projects identified and documented.

Implementation is also dependent in part on Council, through the Tourism Manager and the Shoalhaven Tourism Board, working closely with local tourism and business organisations and with operators, with all stakeholders having a common vision, goals and objectives.

To be effective, the Plan must be a living document that is constantly evolving. The recommended actions need to be implemented and the results evaluated. Periodically the Plan may need to be revised.

## 2. THE MARKET PLACE

### 2.1 Changes Occurring in the Market Place

Over the past five years there have been a number of significant changes in the market place that have been taken into consideration in planning for the tourism sector in the Shoalhaven going forward. These changes have included:

- Structural changes in the market place as a result of:
  - Global Financial Crisis and the resultant changes in both consumer behaviour and mindsets
  - The impact of the increased value of the Australian Dollar.
  - Generational change – with Baby Boomers moving into retirement, Generation X becoming a major market for domestic family holidays and short breaks, and Generation Y entering the market place.
- The new generations of travellers are far more educated, sophisticated and demanding than previous generations. They are also less loyal to a destination, and far less tolerant of mediocre product and customer service.
- Technological changes – including the internet now being the primary tool used to research and purchase travel, the use of social media to communicate and the emergence and rapid take-up of smart phones and tablets and 'tools' such as Apps and QR Codes.

- Changes in the orbital road network in Sydney and the regional road network in Central NSW, opening up new markets in western and north western Sydney and Central NSW for the City. The sealing of Main Road 92 has also significantly increased the City’s access to the Canberra and Southern NSW market.

## 2.2 People who would like to visit the South Coast

The recently completed Roy Morgan Research demonstrates some very clear distinctions for the South Coast in what type of people are more likely to be visitors.

<p><b>Age</b></p> <p>Under 25 years                    50% less likely            25-34 years                        15% less likely            35-49 years                        25% MORE likely            50-64 years                        19% MORE likely            65+ years                         1% MORE likely</p> <p><b>Education</b></p> <p>Of people who have a diploma or a degree, 32% are more likely to visit. All other forms of educational level are less likely visit.</p> <p><b>Occupation</b></p> <p>Professional manager – 56% more likely to visit            Farmers – 34% more likely to visit            White collar workers – 4% more likely to visit            Skilled workers – 20% less likely            Semi-skilled – 23% less likely            Not employed – 13% less likely</p>	<p><b>Economic</b></p> <p>More likely to be AB Quintile (high income earners) – 55%            Or more likely to be C Quintile – 20%            Less likely are D, E, and FG Quintile</p> <p><b>Generation Profiles of People likely to Visit South Coast</b></p> <p>Pre Boomers – 3% more likely            Baby Boomers – 20% more likely            Generation X – 25% more likely            Generation Y – 27% less likely            Generation Z – 54% less likely</p> <p><b>Internet Usage</b></p> <p>7 – 15 hours per week – medium users – more likely 16%            Up to 7 hours per week – light internet – more likely 10%            More than 15 hours per week – heavy users – less likely 4%            No internet use – less likely 32%</p>
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## 2.3 Implications for the Shoalhaven

People interested in visiting Shoalhaven are:

- More likely to be 35-64 years old, Baby Boomers and Generation X
- More likely to be high income earners (AB Quintile) and tertiary educated, white collar workers
- More likely to use the internet 1-2 hours per day.

Shoalhaven Tourism needs to recognise that more than half its visitors are less than 45 years of age. The challenges for the City are:

- To be ready to meet the requirements of Generation Y.
- Meeting the needs and expectations of the next generation of retirees – Baby Boomers.

## 3. THE MASTERPLAN FRAMEWORK

### 3.1 Vision for the City

Shoalhaven City will retain its position as the second most visited destination in NSW. By 2017 the Shoalhaven will be recognised as a year-round destination, valued for its quality environment and visitor experiences. The City will have a strong and diversified product and market base that capitalises on the natural, cultural and heritage assets of the City and has been developed in ways consistent with principles of sustainability and environmental protection.

### 3.2 Vision for the Shoalhaven Tourism Board

The Shoalhaven Tourism Board will be an innovative, flexible and responsive organisation that leads and drives the tourism industry in Shoalhaven, engages effectively with the industry and excels in marketing and promoting the City and its products and services.

### 3.3 Target

Shoalhaven City Council has set a target of achieving \$1 billion in expenditure from visitors by 2020. The expenditure in 2011 was \$678 million. To achieve this target, expenditure needs to increase by 47.5% from 2011 to 2020 (average of \$35.8 million per annum), equating to a compound growth rate of 4.42% per annum.

### 3.4 Objectives

The primary objective of the Shoalhaven City Tourism Master Plan is to drive demand for the City's products, services and experiences to attract visitation year round, with resultant economic and social benefits for the Shoalhaven community. To achieve this, the Plan focuses on:

- Diversifying the market base of the City to reduce dependence on the City's traditional holiday markets and deliver visitation year round.
- Encouraging development that will take the industry forward, be sustainable and deliver quality visitor products and experiences.
- Ensuring that the infrastructure and services needed to meet the needs and expectation of visitors and facilitate and support the growth of the tourism sector are in place.
- Providing a management structure that delivers efficient decision-making, funding and resources and fosters strong communication and cooperation between key stakeholders.

### 3.5 Positioning

Shoalhaven City will remain the most popular destination in NSW outside of Sydney. Within the South Coast Region, the Shoalhaven will be positioned within the context of the 'Heart, soul and/or essence of the South Coast.' The actual positioning statement should be developed as part of the branding strategy. Shoalhaven City will continue to be positioned as a coastal destination.

### 3.6 Planning Precincts / Marketing Sub-brands

Shoalhaven City is an LGA of dispersed small towns and villages, separated by waterways, farm land and/or tracts of National Parks and State Forest. The Princes Highway forms a central spine through the LGA, with feeder roads leading off the Highway to access both the coastal and rural villages. Only Berry, Nowra-Bomaderry, Milton and Ulladulla are located on the Highway. Many of the towns and villages have similar product and/or markets. For planning and marketing purposes, the City has been divided into seven locality based precincts. There is overlap between the areas, for example the Callala-Myola area also fits within the Bay & Basin area, while for some markets, Sussex Inlet forms part of the Basin product.

- North – Shoalhaven Heads, Berry and Kangaroo Valley
- Nowra – Bomaderry and the Shoalhaven River corridor to the east and west
- Central – Greenwell Point, Culburra Beach, Orient Point, Currarong, Callala Bay, Callala Beach & Myola
- Bay & Basin
- Sussex Inlet, Swan Lake, Cudmirrah and Berrara
- Ulladulla District – from North Bendalong to Lake Tabourie and inland including the Budawang Wilderness Area
- Bawley Coast – from Meroo National Park, south to North Durras plus the Upper Clyde River Valley to the west.

## 4. PRIORITIES

For the period 2012-2107 the priorities are:

### Engagement & Communication

- To engage effectively with the local industry, with the Shoalhaven Board working closely with local industry groups and operators.
- To improve communication with operators and visitors.

- To improve the product knowledge of staff and volunteer in the Visitor Information Centres, Level 3 Information Centres and Ambassador Centres.

## Major Projects

Carried forward from previous Tourism Plans are three major projects that would make a significant contribution to tourism within the City and ensure that Council meets its target expenditure of \$1billion. These projects remain a priority.

- 4-4.5 star branded hotel for Nowra.
- Shaolin Temple complex, proposed for the Currumbene Creek area.
- Large safe boat harbour and associated boat-service and supporting infrastructure.

## Product Development

- To work with local communities to enhance the visual impact, appeal and product base of key localities
- To capitalise more effectively on the National Park, State Forest and Crown Lands Reserves within the City – with these assets providing assets, attractions and experiences, being a venue for events and contributing to the development of special interest and activity based visitation
- To encourage the development of commercial activities and tours.
- To strengthen and coordinate the walking and cycling product available in the City – including the Round the Bay Walk (Jervis Bay), Shoalhaven River Walks and the Bawley Coast Walk.
- To build food and wine tourism.
- To strengthen the cultural attractions sector.
- To continue to build the events sector.
- To support the development of Aboriginal tourism.
- To improve customer service and hospitality skills within both the tourism sector and the broader business community.

## Infrastructure Development

- To put in place the infrastructure needed to foster the growth of activity based markets, focusing initially on cycling and mountain-biking, boating and other water-based activities.
- Upgrade and improve signage throughout the City – in particular directional and facility signage.
- Ensure that visitor information is available in all towns and villages and accessible to all visitors.

## Information & Promotional Collateral

- Improve the City's web and digital presence including the continued development and enhancement of the Shoalhaven Holiday website and application and improving Shoalhaven content on third party websites – moving towards all operators being an 'i' site.
- Increase the training and support provided to Level 3 and Ambassador Centres.
- Develop locality and activity based promotional collateral that is consistent with the branding of the Shoalhaven
- Encourage ongoing training in web, digital and social network media for Tourism staff and operators.

## Market Development

- Continue to consolidate and grow existing markets, focusing on the shoulder and off-season periods.
- Continue to build the events sector, concentrating on sporting events, conferences and meetings and weddings and functions.
- Diversify the market base through the development of special interest and activity based marketing, concentrating initially on fishing, boating, canoeing, mountain-biking and cycling.

## Marketing & Promotion

- To maintain the mainstream / mass media marketing to build awareness, but at a lower spend.
- To move into data-base driven direct marketing, with a significant higher level of direct communication with the customer.
- To support these activities with improved web-based presence and hard and soft promotional collateral, as well as with increased PR marketing and continued representation at trade and consumer shows.
- To increase sales and marketing skills (particularly internet and digital based) amongst tourism operators.

## 5. STRATEGIES

The key strategies to achieve the objectives of the Tourism Master Plan are:

<b>Strategy 1 Enhance the visual impact, appeal and product base of key localities within the City</b>	
<p><u>Goals:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To assist the local communities to build their tourism product and grow visitation.</li> <li>• Capitalise effectively on the assets, facilities and services available in each locality to build and diversify the market base.</li> <li>• To build on the differences and natural strengths of each locality to create a range of ‘destinations’ within the City – places that visitors identify with specific activities and places that become ‘must do’ trips for people staying in the Shoalhaven and surrounding LGAs.</li> <li>• To ensure that each of the localities has in place the infrastructure and services needed to support tourism.</li> <li>• To encourage development that is compatible with and enhances the character and lifestyle of the local area.</li> </ul>	<p><u>Focus:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coordinated approach to development – Council, communities and operators working to a shared vision for each precinct / locality.</li> </ul>
<b>Strategy 2 Upgrade and expand the attraction and activity base of the City</b>	
<p><u>Goals:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To ensure that the significance and value of the City’s coastal and rural ‘landscapes’ for tourism, continues to be recognised and protected.</li> <li>• To ensure that attractions and activities that are developed are sustainable.</li> <li>• To create signature attractions and experiences, for example – 3 ‘must do’ – walks, mountain-bike rides, 4WD trails etc – and then hanging / clustering other activities off these.</li> <li>• To achieve greater utilisation of assets.</li> <li>• To ensure that any proposed development is consistent with the capacity of the individual communities and businesses to accommodate growth.</li> <li>• Increased investment by the State and Commonwealth Government Agencies in the assets that they control / manage within the City.</li> <li>• To build the local events and attract established specialty ‘footloose’ National and International tour operators (e.g. specialist photography tour operators, adventure-based companies) to encourage them to include the City’s products in their tour programs and itineraries.</li> </ul>	<p><u>Focus:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Building shoulder and low season visitation around the natural assets of the City – National Parks, State Forests, Crown Reserves, waterways – identifying signature attractions and experiences and improving infrastructure, information and promotional collateral.</li> <li>• Encouraging the development of commercial activities and tours.</li> <li>• Strengthening and coordinating the walking product available in the City.</li> <li>• Building food and wine tourism.</li> <li>• Strengthening the cultural attractions sector.</li> <li>• Continuing to build the events sector.</li> <li>• Providing support and advice where relevant, to assist the local Aboriginal Land Councils and communities develop tourism experiences and enterprises.</li> </ul>
<b>Strategy 3 Put in place the infrastructure and facilities needed to support the growth of special interest and activity based markets and expand the product base of the area.</b>	
<p><u>Goals:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To utilise the assets available in the City to build special interest and activity based markets that will visit the Shoalhaven year-round.</li> <li>• To provide visitors with a greater choice of products and facilities.</li> <li>• To develop assets and facilities to a standard suitable for hosting events that will bring visitors into the City.</li> </ul>	<p><u>Focus:</u></p> <p>Improving and expanding infrastructure for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Boating, fishing and canoeing (waterways Infrastructure)</li> <li>• Cycling</li> <li>• Mountain Biking</li> </ul>
<b>Strategy 4 Ensure that infrastructure, facilities and services needed to facilitate and support the</b>	

<b>growth of the tourism sector are in place.</b>	
<p><u>Goals:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To provide the infrastructure, facilities and services needed to support and facilitate growth in the tourism industry within Shoalhaven City.</li> <li>• To ensure that the infrastructure, facilities and services provided meets user needs and expectations.</li> </ul>	<p><u>Focus:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Accommodation</b> Attracting a branded 4+ star hotel/serviced apartments to Nowra Building occupancy Up-skilling operators / improving digital presence</li> <li>• <b>Visitor Information Services</b> Branded locality and activity based information and promotional collateral Move to digital information Use of VICs to showcase product Increasing support to Level 3 and Ambassador Information Outlets</li> <li>• <b>Signage</b> Motivational signage along the Princes Highway corridor (eg bill boards) Improved directional signage throughout City Comprehensive information boards in each locality Use of international symbols</li> <li>• <b>Access &amp; Transport</b> Deliver the best outcomes from the upgrading of the Princes Highway Capitalise on rail access to the northern Shoalhaven</li> <li>• <b>Parks &amp; Reserves</b> Continued high standard of maintenance Specialist parks – Water Play, Adventure Playgrounds</li> </ul>
<b>Strategy 5 Increase visitation by strengthening and diversifying the market base of the LGA</b>	
<p><u>Goals:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A diversified market base with reduced dependency on the primary markets.</li> <li>• Year-round visitation.</li> <li>• The Shoalhaven recognised as a destination for quality events - conference, sporting, and weddings.</li> <li>• The Shoalhaven recognised as a 'must do / must visit' location for a diverse range of activities.</li> </ul>	<p><u>Focus:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Building business events – conferences, meetings etc</li> <li>• Growing the weddings and function market</li> </ul>
<b>Strategy 6 Apply targeted marketing and promotions to achieving yield</b>	
<p><u>Goals:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognised stand-alone brand for Shoalhaven and its precincts.</li> <li>• A database which represents the Shoalhaven target markets and delivers response to quality offers.</li> <li>• Maintaining high visibility through main stream media.</li> <li>• Setting and meeting KPIs – key performance indicators – for marketing promotions, not just visitor statistics.</li> </ul>	<p><u>Focus:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Defining the Shoalhaven Brand and precinct sub-brands</li> <li>• Grow product information base through use of contemporary technology and operator engagement</li> <li>• Maintaining mass media communication to the holiday market but at a lower investment</li> <li>• Adding direct marketing to the current media mix – ensuring direct communication with the prospective customer</li> <li>• Increase the marketing emphasis on business events (conference, meetings and exhibitions) sporting events and weddings.</li> <li>• Build visitation from specialist and activity based markets</li> <li>• Improve monitoring practices to ensure focus for market development</li> </ul>

## 6. TAKING THE INDUSTRY FORWARD

The tourism sector in the Shoalhaven does not provide an industry base of sufficient scale or depth to be able to create an industry-based tourism organisation, nor could it generate funds through membership without the impact falling on only part of the industry. While there are committed organisations and individuals, the tourism sector in the Shoalhaven is largely passive and inactive. With an unsophisticated tourism sector doing only limited local marketing the continuation of support for the marketing and development of tourism in the Shoalhaven needs to rest with Shoalhaven Council, through a Committee of Council empowered to commit funds within its approved budget.

The Shoalhaven tourism sector is less sophisticated than competing areas that draw on the Sydney and Canberra market. The Shoalhaven Tourism Board (STB) and Council, while supporting the industry with significant resources, does not provide leadership, or take an interventionist role in tourism development.

It is recommended that the STB re-establishes its role in tourism development as documented under its guidelines. The Board needs to take a strong leadership role, re-engage with the tourism sector and drive the change needed to take the industry forward.

Council's Tourism Unit is under-resourced for this task and does not have the professional marketing, product development and digital skills needed. This Plan recommends the strengthening of the management team to meet the requirements of contemporary marketing. The recommended structure for Tourism Unit within Council is:

- Tourism Manager
- Product Manager – To work with operators to develop product packages for direct marketing, training less skilled operators, brochure and information production, promotional packages direct marketing campaigns and for growing the database. It will also support new entrants and bring them in to contemporary marketing.
- Digital and web management specialist – website and app development and maintenance, social media, data base development.
- Events Manager
- Information Services / VIC Manager
- Coordination and support person

This entails one new position - Product Manager and the re-structuring of existing positions.



<b>Strategy 7: To provide the structure and resources needed to take the industry forward</b>	
<p><u>Goals:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strong leadership by the STB</li> <li>• Effective engagement between the STB, tourism operators and other key stakeholders and strong STB-industry partnerships</li> <li>• Providing Council's Tourism Unit with the skills and resources needed to effectively respond the changes that are occurring in the marketplace.</li> </ul>	<p><u>Focus:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Structure Review for the STB</li> <li>• Use of working groups &amp; 'pay to play' promotional activities</li> <li>• Increase resources committed to digital marketing and product development</li> <li>• STB – industry partnerships</li> </ul>