



Love the lake

DRAFT
LAKE MACQUARIE CITY
DESTINATION MANAGEMENT
PLAN 2022-2026
FULL PLAN



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.

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MAYOR'S MESSAGE



Tourism in our city is at an exciting turning point, with Lake Macquarie perfectly positioned to reinvent itself as a vibrant, contemporary coastal city.

This Destination Management Plan builds on the gains we've made in recent years, and provides the blueprint for further growing our visitor economy.

It provides a clear direction to make the most of emerging opportunities and manage visitor growth sustainably.

With our spectacular coastline, the Watagan Mountains and the lake itself all on our doorstep, the opportunities to capitalise on the tourism sector are almost endless.

Lake Macquarie is a unique destination, encouraging a relaxed and nature immersed lifestyle, while also offering an abundance of world-class events, a thriving night-time economy and a rich arts and culture scene.

Adding to this, we're home to a growing number of tourism businesses, attractions and projects that continue to add value to our visitor economy, from off-the-grid eco-resorts to international-standard hotels.

Over the next five years, Council will continue to expand the city's capacity to grow tourism, as well as enhance Lake Macquarie's product offering.

Significant upcoming projects include the Cedar Mill entertainment precinct, set to host major international acts for up to 30,000 people, BlackRock Motor Sports Complex at Wakefield, and a major upgrade of the Hunter Sports Centre at Glendale.

These are certainly exciting times for our city, and I look forward to working with local tourism and business operators, and the broader community to implement this plan and deliver a stronger, more resilient and more sustainable visitor economy.



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.

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 plus visitor expenditure

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 and entertainment. 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. 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.



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, chill-out.

Have an adventure: explore, discover, challenge yourself.

KEY ATTRIBUTES

Stunning setting: spectacular coastline, glistening healthy lake, rugged mountains, National Parks, State Conservation Areas, 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, contemporary dining

Accessible, Affordable.



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.

INTRODUCTION

OVERVIEW

THE JOURNEY TO DATE

Tourism forms part of the economic base of Lake Macquarie City, with expenditure by visitors contributing to the viability of many local businesses and providing local jobs.

Recognising the importance of the visitor economy, Lake Macquarie City Council adopted its first Destination Management Plan (DMP) in 2013. DMPs were introduced by Tourism Australia and Destination NSW as a tool to developing and managing tourism destinations. A DMP is a pre-requisite to accessing State and Commonwealth tourism grant funding programs.

In 2017, a product audit undertaken jointly by Destination NSW and Council's Tourism team identified that the city's strengths were in outdoor, adventure and nature-based tourism and recommended focusing on these attributes and building the 'under 45 years, adventure-seeker' market.

The DMP was revised in 2018. It commenced the transition to the new market positioning and focused on providing a strong foundation for growth. Most of the DMP recommendations and actions have, or are in the process of, being implemented.

Table 1.1 Progress: Status of the DMP (2018-22) actions

COMPLETED

Events Strategy	New tourism website
Urban and Public Art Strategy and Arts, Heritage and Cultural Plan.	New promotional collateral
Lake Activation Strategy	Governance/ restructure
	Interlinked Heritage trail
	Creative Lake Arts Precinct

IMPLEMENTED AND ONGOING

'Love the Lake' branding
Utilising digital media
Regional collaboration
Marketing strategy

UNDERWAY

Investigation/Planning/Proposals in place

Improving information services
Aboriginal tourism
Improving the Swansea Channel
Establishing lakeside tourism hubs
Additional accommodation
Improving visitor facilities – Belmont Wetlands

Being implemented

Developing quality cultural infrastructure
Positioning Lake Macquarie City as a national sporting hub
Enhancing recreation experiences
Installing public art
Town centre/main street beautification
Improving jetties and moorings
Improving visitor facilities – Watagan Mountains
Reviewing regulations
Tourism Ambassador Program

STILL TO ADDRESS

Large performing arts and conference centre
High-end brand hotel



Since 2018, Council has adopted a broad range of strategies and plans, many of which will deliver outcomes that will enhance the vibrancy, amenity and appeal of the city for both residents and visitors. Accompanying this has been investment by the State Government in marine infrastructure and upgrading facilities in some of the National Parks and State Conservation Areas; investment by Council in upgrading of Lake Mac Holiday Parks and developing cultural attractions; expansion and diversification of some local tourism businesses; and approval of several major tourism-recreational projects that will deliver new accommodation, attractions, activities and infrastructure over the next five years.

Over the same period, there have been significant shifts in State Government tourism policy including an increased emphasis on regional dispersal of domestic and international visitors and stimulating growth in the events sector; changes in the marketplace; changes in the way consumers plan and book travel; and since March 2020, the impacts of COVID-19 on domestic and international travel.

The 2022-2026 DMP builds on the previous DMP and the work undertaken by Council over the past five years, taking into consideration that changes that have occurred as well as the projects and initiatives in the pipeline. It also identifies additional opportunities and projects that will strengthen and build the product base and/or enhance the visitor experience. These opportunities and projects need to be assessed and, if feasible, taken to 'shovel ready' status for inclusion in Council's next Delivery Plan and to seek grant funding where needed.

LOOKING FORWARD

CONTEXT FOR THE DMP

- The success of the change in direction of the marketing (2017) provides opportunities to continue to build the markets by enhancing and diversifying outdoor, adventure and nature-based activities. Allied to this is the need to upgrade assets and infrastructure to accommodate and manage growth.
- The implementation of Council's arts, events, cultural and heritage strategies and town centre and foreshore master plans will accelerate the

transition of Lake Macquarie to a contemporary, vibrant, coastal city. It will also drive growth in day visitors from the surrounding region and VFR visitors in the short to medium term.

- Council has a significant number of projects in the planning and development pipeline (Table 4.1), with these projects expected to come online from 2024 onwards. These projects will stimulate growth in day and overnight visitors, with the western side of the lake in particular, seeing a significant influx of visitors. Assets, infrastructure, facilities and services (particularly on the western side of

the lake) will need to be upgraded and expanded to accommodate growth. Improved connectivity between the coast and lakeside tourism precincts, railway stations and the Watagan Ranges will be a priority.

- Investigation and planning need to commence to leverage potential game-changing projects (e.g. improvements to the Swansea Channel, decommissioning of power station and coal mining sites, Awaba Conservation Area), access grant funding and maintain the momentum.

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.

PURPOSE OF THE DMP

Destination management introduces an integrated approach to the development, management and marketing of tourism destinations. The DMP sets the direction and framework to grow the city's visitor economy for next five years and addresses:

- current status of the city's visitor economy
- the vision for the city's visitor economy
- opportunities to strengthen and grow the city's market base to deliver year-round visitation
- opportunities to enhance, expand and diversify the city's attractions, activities and experiences
- the infrastructure, facilities and services needed to facilitate and support growth
- directions for the ongoing positioning, marketing and promotion of the city
- industry development and capacity building.

OUTCOMES SOUGHT

Council's Community Strategic Plan has, as a core objective, 'Our city is a popular destination with a wide variety of experiences'¹. Council is looking for the DMP to provide initiatives that will 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.

¹ Lake Macquarie City Council (2017) Our Future in Focus – Community Strategic Plan

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DANTIA LAKE MACQUARIE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

THE PLANNING PROCESS

Formulating the DMP involved the following key tasks:

RESEARCH/ CONTEXT

- Review current DMP
- Council Plans and Strategies
- Regional and State Plans and Strategies
- Visitation statistics
- Market research data

CONSULTATION

- Council
- Dantia
- Stakeholder workshop
- Tourism and business operators
- Land management agencies

DESTINATION ANALYSIS

- Destination profile
- Product audit
- Infrastructure, facilities and services
- Market assessment
- Competitor analysis
- SWOT analysis

DMP

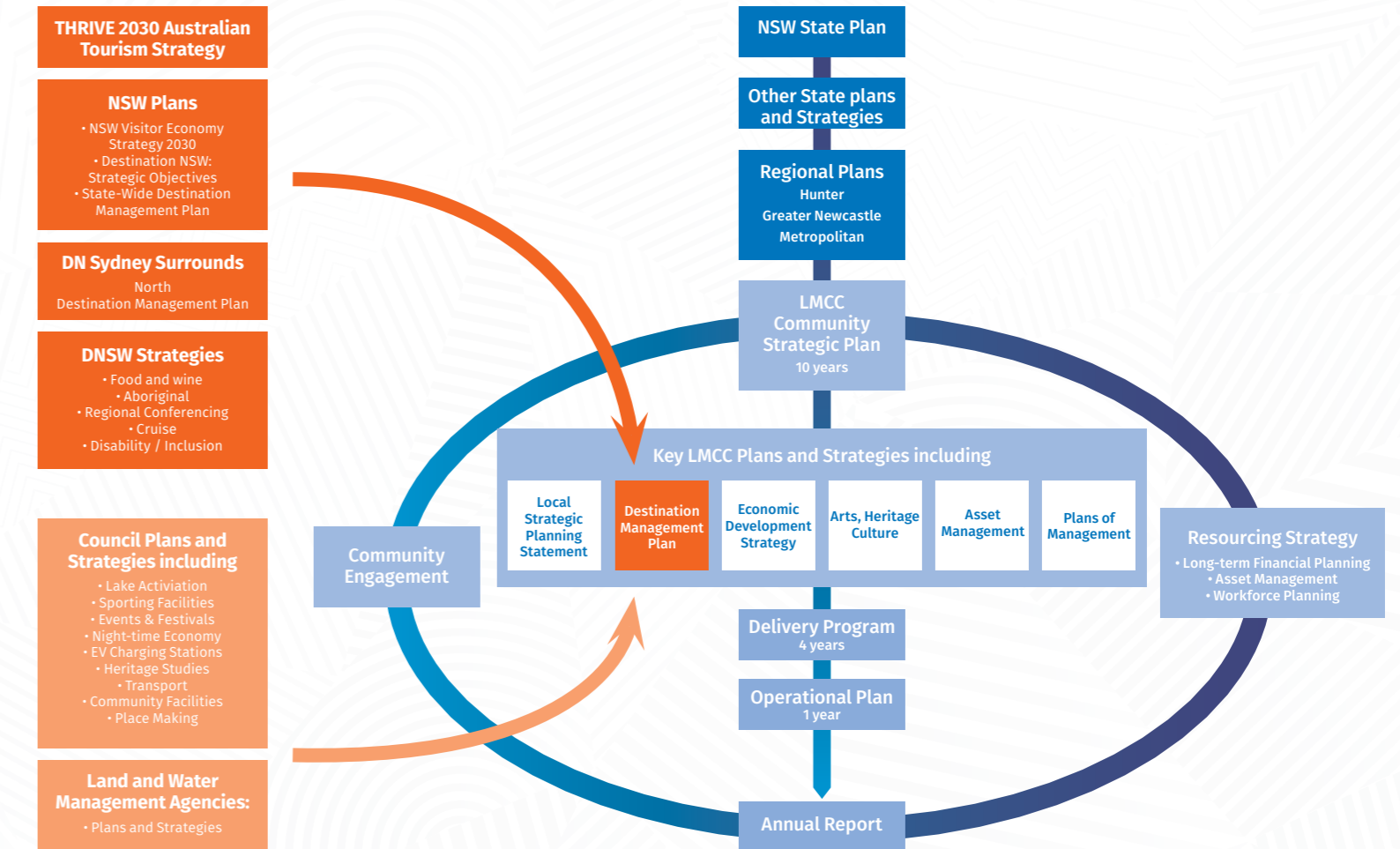
- Draft plan
- Public exhibition
- Final plan

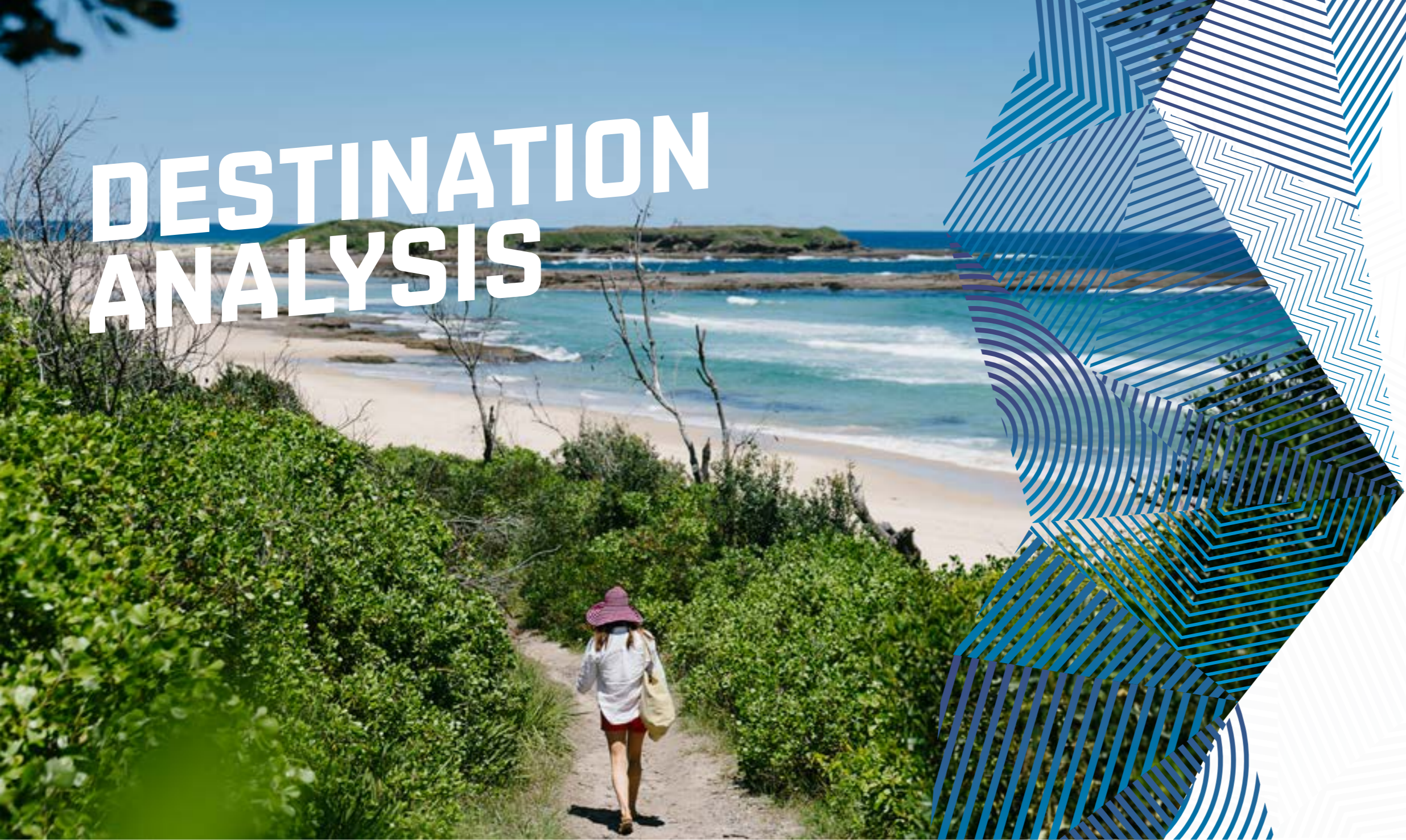


STRATEGIC CONTEXT

This DMP was prepared within the framework set by Federal and State Government policies, strategies and plans for the development and management of tourism destinations. It is also consistent with the NSW Government's priorities for Regional NSW and key plans and strategies for the Hunter Region and the directions of Council's Strategic Plans. Information on these plans is provided in Section 2 of the Support Document.

Figure 2.1 Strategic context for the Lake Macquarie City Destination Management Plan





DESTINATION ANALYSIS

LAKE MACQUARIE CITY

OVERVIEW

Located in the lower Hunter Region, 90 minutes north of Sydney, the City of Lake Macquarie is the seventh largest city in NSW. Lake Macquarie City has an area of 785-square-kilometres and is bound by Newcastle to the north east, the Central Coast to the south, the Pacific Ocean to the east and Cessnock to the west and north west.

Lake Macquarie City straddles much of the foreshore of Lake Macquarie, the largest salt water lake in

Australia (110km²) and one of Australia's premier destinations for sailing. To the east, the city has 32 kilometres of stunning coastline with beaches, spectacular cliffs, sea caves, sand dunes and coastal wetlands. To the west is a narrow strip of rich agricultural land, bordered by the rugged Watagan Mountains. Most of the range is incorporated within National Parks, State Conservation Areas and State Forests, with the area popular for outdoors, nature and adventure-based activities.

Lake Macquarie City extends across the traditional lands of the Awabakal people.

Lake Macquarie is home to about 207,775² people, spread across 95 communities. Charlestown is the largest town centre, with other significant centres being Swansea and Belmont along the coastal strip; Warners Bay, Mount Hutton, Glendale and Cardiff in the north of the city; and Toronto and Morisset on the western side of the lake. Charlestown, Glendale and Morisset are designated 'Strategic Economic Centres'³ with these centres having the potential for significant investment, population and employment growth.

Lake Macquarie has traditionally been a popular area for beach and lakeside holidays, with a significant influx of visitors during the summer school holidays. Over the past five years, the focus has shifted with Lake Macquarie now positioned as a destination for outdoors, adventure and nature-based activities and sporting and community events. The visitor economy is in a growth phase.



² RemPLAN
³ City of Lake Macquarie – Shaping the Future – Local Strategic Planning Statement



ACCESS

Lake Macquarie is well positioned and highly accessible. About 6.170 million people live within 2-2.5 hours' drive of the city. Via the M1 Pacific Motorway, Lake Macquarie is about 90 minutes' drive from the heart of Sydney and around 40-60 minutes' drive from the Central Coast. Lake Macquarie is about 10 minutes' drive south of Newcastle and about 30 minutes' drive from growth corridors in Cessnock and Maitland. The highway and regional road networks provide access to the Hunter, Central West, New England North West and North Coast Regions of NSW.

Lake Macquarie is less than two hours' drive from Sydney International Airport and about 25 minutes' drive from Newcastle Airport. Newcastle Airport has plans to expand its domestic routes and introduce international flights, with the number of passengers forecast to double to about 2.6 million by 2036⁴. Lake Macquarie Airport is licensed for general aviation and can accommodate small charter flights and seaplanes can land on the lake. Lake Macquarie

will be readily accessible from Western Sydney International Airport when it opens in 2026.

The Port of Newcastle Cruise Berth is within 15 minutes' drive of Lake Macquarie, providing opportunities for the city to offer a tours and activities for cruise ship passengers.

Sydney Trains intercity rail services are available, linking suburbs in the city's west to Sydney, Newcastle, the Central Coast and Hunter Region. Via the regional rail network, Lake Macquarie is accessible from the NSW North Coast, Upper Hunter and New England – North West regions. There is a proposal for 'very fast train' services between Sydney and Newcastle, which will pass through the western side of the city, with this service likely to reduce travel times between Sydney and Lake Macquarie from roughly two hours to about 45 minutes.

Lake Macquarie is part of the Greater

Newcastle regional bus network, with a good internal bus service with links to key centres in Newcastle LGA. Lake Macquarie also has a network of cycleways and shared pathways, several of which are part of the regional network, providing access to the Lake Macquarie from Newcastle.

ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES

Lake Macquarie is a hub for small to medium businesses with the city having about 14,000 businesses. The main economic sectors are construction, coal mining, manufacturing, retail, health care and social assistance, and education and training. The city has a focus on growing the knowledge and creative industries and tourism sectors. The cessation of mining and coal-fired power generation in the west and north-west of the city will provide large tracts of land for development.

OUTLOOK FOR THE CITY

Lake Macquarie City

Lake Macquarie is in transition, with Council seeking to make the city one of the most productive, adaptable, sustainable and liveable places in Australia⁵. The population of the city is forecast to increase to 225,000 people by 2036, with the possibility that the population could reach 300,000 as a result of liveability pressures in Sydney, the increased ability to work remotely, and rapid transport links between Lake Macquarie and Sydney.

Plans for the city (Figure 3.2) include:

- positioning Charlestown, Glendale and Morisset as Strategic Economic Centres, offering high-density living, employment and a diverse range of higher order facilities and services
- consolidating and strengthening the town centres of Swansea, Belmont, Mount Hutton, Warners Bay, Cardiff and Toronto

- urban intensification around the strategic economic centres and town centres, in the Charlestown-Mount Hutton-Belmont, Morisset-Cooranbong corridors, Caves Beach area and the North West Growth Area, which includes the corridors from Speers Point and Cardiff to Glendale and northwest to West Wallsend
- business and industrial park developments in the North West Growth Area and around Morisset, with a focus on knowledge and creative industries
- improved transport links to and throughout the city, including a fast train service between Sydney, Newcastle and the Mid North Coast, high-speed bus routes and a ferry service operating on the lake
- interconnected network of shared pathways and cycleways

- further activation of Lake Macquarie and foreshore areas
- additional quality recreation, sporting and cultural facilities
- a vibrant night-time economy.

There are also major tourism projects in the pipeline that will provide additional accommodation, attractions and experiences (see Section 4.6).

The increased liveability and accessibility of the city will increase its appeal as a visitor destination, while population and business growth will translate directly into increased VFR and business-related travel.

⁴ Newcastle Airport – 2036 Newcastle Airport Vision (note: this was pre-COVID 19)

⁵ City of Lake Macquarie – Shaping the Future – Local Strategic Planning Statement



Figure 3.2 Structure and opportunities map



Source: Lake Macquarie City Council Local Strategic Plan

SURROUNDING REGION

Changes occurring in the surrounding region that will have implications for the visitor economy in Lake Macquarie include:

- Population growth – Over the next two decades, significant population growth is forecast for the Lower Hunter (129,000 additional people), Central Coast (98,250 additional people) and the Greater Sydney Region (2.415 million additional people). This will translate into greater market opportunities for Lake Macquarie City.

On the downside, population growth, particularly in adjoining LGAs is likely to exert increasing pressure on key visitor precincts within Lake Macquarie including the beaches, National Parks, State Forests and Conservation Areas, the lake and the foreshore reserves. Infrastructure, facilities and services will need to be improved and expanded with additional funds and resources needed to effectively manage key assets.

- Completion of major road infrastructure projects in the Greater Sydney Region – This will increase the accessibility of Lake Macquarie to western, south-western and southern Sydney, potentially opening up new markets.

- Significant increase in medium and high-density living in Sydney, Newcastle and the Central Coast. This is leading to a reduction in both car ownership and the number of young people with licences. Pre-COVID, there was an increasing number of people travelling by train for leisure purposes with the Sydney market primarily travelling west to the Blue Mountains and south to Kiama and Berry. Improved rail services between Sydney and Newcastle, and the introduction of the very fast train, will create opportunities for rail tourism, with the need to provide links between key railway stations and visitor generating precincts. Rail access will also support the proposed Cedar Mill and Black Rock Motor Park projects and, if infrastructure and facilities are in place, could provide opportunities to grow mountain biking and outdoor and adventure-based activities in the Watagan Mountains.

- Expansion of domestic air services into Newcastle Airport and the introduction of international flights – Pre-COVID Newcastle Airport handled about 1.3 million passengers a year, with passenger numbers forecast to reach 1.767 million by 2026 and 2.6 million by 2037⁶

- Opening of Stage 1 of the Western Sydney Airport in 2026 – Western Sydney Airport is less than two hours' drive from Lake Macquarie and will have rail access. Stage 1 has the capacity for 10 million passengers a year.

- Proposed multi-purpose entertainment and conference centre as part of the Broadmeadow Sports and Events Precinct (Hunter Park) in Newcastle City – The Centre is expected to seat 8000-10,000 for major events, which will create significant demand for accommodation in the Newcastle and Lake Macquarie LGAs.

- Proposed large outdoor entertainment venue (22,000 people) in Hunter Wine Country (Cessnock City) – While this will offer a very similar experience to Cedar Mill, it will not have the advantage of rail access.

⁶ Newcastle Airport Master Plan – Note: these forecasts were prepared pre-COVID, with the COVID-19 travel restrictions and border closures delaying the expansion plans.



THE VISITOR ECONOMY

STRUCTURE

Lake Macquarie is part of the Destination Sydney Surrounds North (DSSN) tourism region, as defined by Destination NSW. This region incorporates the Blue Mountains, Central Coast, plus the nine LGAs in the Hunter Region.

Lake Macquarie City Council is the key driver of the city's visitor economy. Council operates the Visitor Information Centre, five holiday parks, the Museum of Art and Culture yapang, Multi-Arts Pavilion mima, and other cultural facilities; organises and supports events; is actively involved in product development; coordinates and funds the marketing and promotion of the city; and has a significant investment in the reserves, parks and gardens, infrastructure and facilities that underpin visitation. Council is also the regulatory authority in areas such as planning, development and food safety.

Council has in place a partnership program for tourism operators, with benefits including the ability to promote businesses through the Visit Lake Mac website, visitor guide and Visitor Information Centre; participate in marketing and promotional activities;

and list on the online booking system. Council also hosts industry networking breakfasts.

Other key players include:

- Destination NSW – provides a range of cooperative marketing and industry development opportunities
- Destination Sydney Surrounds North – facilitates product and industry development
- Dantia – Lake Macquarie's economic development company, responsible for facilitating economic development within the city, including facilitating major tourism projects
- tourism, business, venue and infrastructure operators and event organisers
- land and water management agencies – including National Parks and Wildlife Service, NSW Forestry Corporation, Crown Lands, Transport for NSW (lake and marine infrastructure)
- event organisers
- business, community and sporting groups

ECONOMIC CONTRIBUTION

The visitor economy contributes an estimated \$550.242 million to the city's output and \$266.032 million in value-add, with the sector accounting for 2.6 per cent of the city's total output and value-add. In 2019, the city had 1617 tourism businesses, of which 40.3 per cent were sole traders, 34.1 per cent had 1-4 employees, 20.8 per cent had 5-19 employees and 4.8 per cent had 20 or more employees⁷. The visitor economy provides 2917 jobs (4.6 per cent of jobs within the city)⁸.

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.

⁷ Tourism Research Australia, Lake Macquarie City Visitor Profile, YE December 2019

⁸ 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.

ATTRACTIONS, ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS

ATTRACTIONS

Lake Macquarie has a concentration of natural assets, with these supporting a range of outdoor, nature and adventure-based activities (see Support Document Section 4 – Product Audit). The city's primary attractions are:

Lake Macquarie

The lake is the largest permanent saltwater lake in the Southern Hemisphere. In addition to being a strong scenic asset, the lake and adjoining foreshore areas support a diverse range of active and passive land and water-based recreational activities and events. The forested headlands of the Lake Macquarie State Conservation Area (SCA) are popular for bushwalking. The white sands of Naru Beach and surrounding sand islands are one of the areas featured in the marketing of the city. Commercial activities on the lake include jet boats, charter fishing, charter yachts, seaplanes, boat and other watercraft hire, cruises and tours.



Coastline

Beaches, headlands, rock platforms and coastal reserves – There are four patrolled beaches (Redhead, Blacksmiths, Caves Beach and Catherine Hill Bay), three of which are fully accessible, several dog-friendly beaches and a beach where four-wheel driving (4WD) is permissible. Catherine Hill Bay is a State Heritage Listed coastal village with a strong mining heritage. The city has several well-known surf breaks and areas popular for scuba diving. The sea caves at Caves Beach and further south are a unique natural attraction.



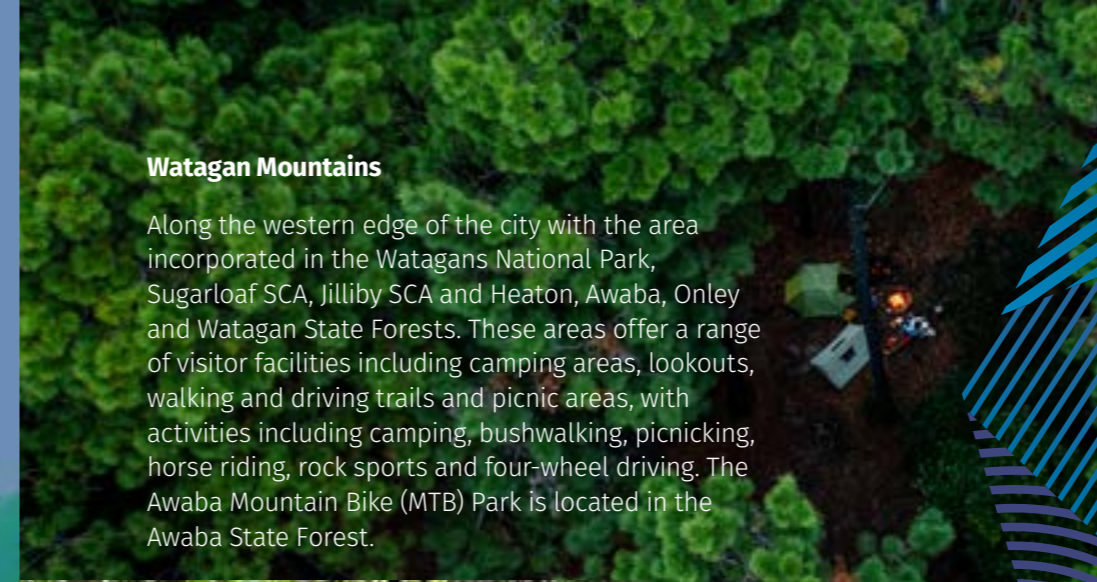
Coastal parks and reserves

Including Glenrock State Conservation Area (SCA), Awabakal Nature Reserve, Wallarah National Park and Belmont Wetlands State Park. These areas support a range of outdoor and nature-based activities including bushwalking, mountain biking and whale watching, with Belmont Wetlands providing 4WD access to part of Nine Mile Beach.



Watagan Mountains

Along the western edge of the city with the area incorporated in the Watagans National Park, Sugarloaf SCA, Jiliby SCA and Heaton, Awaba, Onley and Watagan State Forests. These areas offer a range of visitor facilities including camping areas, lookouts, walking and driving trails and picnic areas, with activities including camping, bushwalking, picnicking, horse riding, rock sports and four-wheel driving. The Awaba Mountain Bike (MTB) Park is located in the Awaba State Forest.



Lake Macquarie trails

Walking, cycling and paddling trails – The city has two iconic trails:

Fernleigh Track – rail trail linking Belmont in Lake Macquarie to Adamstown in Newcastle, with features of the track including Fernleigh Rail Tunnel, historic rail infrastructure, wetlands and forested areas.

Fernleigh Awabakal Shared Track (FAST) – a planned 3.5km shared pathway linking the end of the Fernleigh Track at Belmont with Blacksmiths beach.

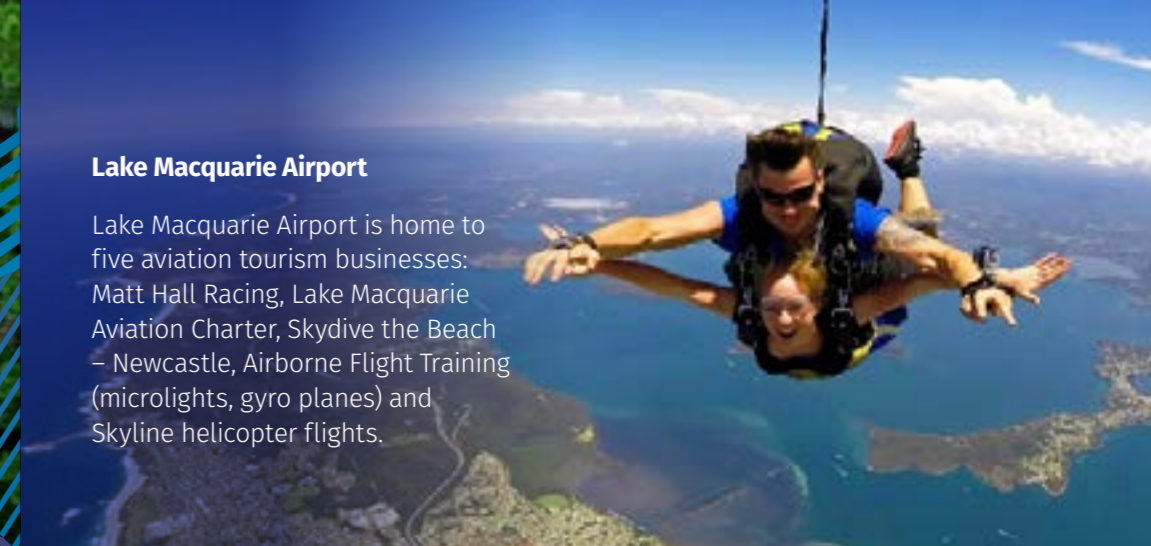
Warners Bay Foreshore shared pathway and sculpture walk – Nine-kilometre track along the northern edge of the lake, linking the Lake Macquarie Museum of Art and Culture yapang, Multi-Arts Pavilion mima, Speers Point Park and Variety Playground, Warners Bay, and Red Bluff Boardwalk.

The Great North Walk (connecting Sydney and Newcastle) passes through Glenrock SCA, the northern part of the city and the Watagan Mountains.



Lake Macquarie Airport

Lake Macquarie Airport is home to five aviation tourism businesses: Matt Hall Racing, Lake Macquarie Aviation Charter, Skydive the Beach – Newcastle, Airborne Flight Training (microlights, gyro planes) and Skyline helicopter flights.



Lake Macquarie Museum of Art and Culture yapang

Art museum, sculpture garden and cafe with extensive views over Lake Macquarie.



Speers Point Park and Variety Playground

With facilities including the Multi-Arts Pavilion mima, the largest all-abilities playground in Australia, jetty, picnic facilities and the Cockle Creek kayak trail.



Supporting attractions include:

- Cultural attractions like the SEEN@Swansea exhibition space, Dobell House, Rathmines Heritage Museum and Creative LAKE Sculpture Trail
- Shopping and dining, with shopping experiences ranging from the Charlestown Square retail precinct through to the historic villages of West Wallsend and Teralba

- Sommercial activities including horse riding, karting, paintball, archery, virtual reality, 10 pin bowling, trampolining and ice skating
- Lake Ferry, interlinking popular lakeside locations.

ACTIVITIES

The activities that can be undertaken in Lake Macquarie include:

Outdoor, adventure, nature-based

- Beach activities
- Surfing
- Sailing, motorised boating, water sports, jet boat
- Fishing – rock, beach, lake
- Paddling (canoe, kayak, stand-up paddle board) – sea and still water
- Cycling – mountain biking, road cycling, BMX, gravel grinding.
- Hiking, bushwalking, walking – coastal, lake and mountains
- Camping
- Four-wheel driving
- Trail bike touring
- Horse riding
- Rock sports – indoor and outdoor
- Aviation activities – sky diving, joy flights, adventure flights
- Birdwatching
- Golf
- Picnicking
- Karting
- Paintball
- Archery
- Hunting

Other

- Lifestyle shopping and dining
- Gallery browsing
- Creative and cultural activities
- 10 pin bowling
- Ice skating
- Trampolining
- Virtual reality experiences
- Going to the cinema
- Live entertainment and performances



ACCESSIBLE/INCLUSIVE/ADAPTIVE ATTRACTIONS, ACTIVITIES AND EXPERIENCES

Lake Macquarie offers a range of accessible attractions, activities and experiences for people with disabilities. These include:

- beaches – Blacksmiths, Caves Beach, Redhead, Grannies Pool
- Belmont Baths and Toronto Swim Centre
- Lake Macquarie Variety Playground
- canoe/kayaking including tours and hire
- shared pathways
- accessible fishing jetties
- Glenrock SCA accessible bushwalk
- Onley State Forest accessible picnic, camping and toilet facilities
- Awaba MTB Park adaptive MTB trail
- Sailability programs at Belmont and Toronto
- cultural and heritage attractions like Museum of Art and Culture yapang, Mulit-Arts Pavilion mima, SEEN@Swansea, Creative Lake Sculpture Trail, Rathmines Heritage Centre
- Star Club Equine Program at Emerald Park Equine, Mandalong
- Yara Balba Stables fully accessible farm-stay accommodation with art classes and horse riding
- Rathmines Bowling Club disability bowls.

These activities are supported by fully-accessible cabins in the Swansea and Belmont Holiday Parks and group accommodation facilities at the Catalina Lake Front Retreat. All of the licensed clubs and some of the cafes and restaurants are fully accessible.

There is potential for Lake Macquarie City to position itself as a centre for accessible outdoor and soft adventure-based activities.





FESTIVALS AND EVENTS

Lake Macquarie City has a diverse calendar of events. In 2018-2019 (pre-COVID), the city hosted 184 events, with these attracting an estimated 223,102 attendees⁹. High-profile events include:

- Float your Boat
- Living Smart Festival
- Fast and Loud Festival including Lake Macquarie Superboats
- Let's Fish Lake Macquarie
- Loop the Lake (cycle).

The city has a range of quality sporting facilities and is a popular destination for regional and state carnivals across a range of sports including surfing, sailing, lifesaving, mountain biking and team sports.

⁹ Umwelt (2021) Lake Macquarie Activation Strategy – Resource Document – Part C Tourism

REGIONAL CONTEXT

For day trips and short breaks, Lake Macquarie draws primarily from Sydney, Central Coast and Hunter Region. For holidays, the catchment is larger, with the city also drawing from Central NSW, the lower New England North West Region and the lower North Coast. For the Sydney market, Lake Macquarie is primarily competing with localities in the Sydney Surrounds North and South Destination areas, in particular the coastal LGAs, while for the holiday market out of Central NSW and the lower New England North West, Lake Macquarie is mainly competing with the Central Coast, Newcastle, Port Stephens and Mid Coast LGAs.

The coastal LGAs have similar physical environments and attractions to Lake Macquarie City, with beaches and coastline, coastal lakes and/or estuaries, a strip of rural hinterland and escarpment national

parks and/or state forests. Lake Macquarie is 'healthier' and less urbanised than Lake Illawarra in Shellharbour and Wollongong LGAs and the lakes on the Central Coast. Port Stephens, Central Coast, Mid Coast and Shoalhaven have more commercial operators offering outdoor, adventure and nature-based activities than Lake Macquarie City, with these localities also having a stronger tier of supporting attractions, particularly for families, as well as more food, wine and artisan beverage experiences.

The attractions and activities promoted in each of the competitive LGAs and information on the positioning of Lower Hunter, Central and Mid Coast LGAs, their direction and priorities for product development, and the implications and opportunities for Lake Macquarie are summarised in Section 5 of the Support Document.

ACCOMMODATION

Accommodation in Lake Macquarie includes:

- resorts including Caves Coast Bar and Bungalows and Rafferty's by the Lake
- corporate hotels including Apollo International and Macquarie 4 star
- motels (16 properties)
- serviced and holiday apartments
- pub hotels (7 properties)
- caravan parks – five holiday parks operated by Council and two independent parks
- Morisset Showground, which offers powered and unpowered sites
- group accommodation (4 properties) catering for school, church and other groups
- farm stays
- houseboats and charter yachts
- primitive camping at National Parks and State Forests in the Watagan Ranges and on Nine Mile Beach in the Belmont Wetlands State Park
- self-contained, holiday rental properties – 500-600 cabins, apartments and houses listed on sites such as AirBnB and Stayz with these ranging from basic through to luxury properties.

Lake Macquarie experiences capacity constraints during the summer school holidays, long weekends and when there are major events on in the city and/or in Newcastle.

Over the past decade, Lake Macquarie has seen a significant reduction in caravan park accommodation, with a number of caravan parks redeveloped as

mobile home parks and accommodation for over 55s. Council is progressively upgrading its Holiday Parks and redeveloping the Sails Holiday Park at Belmont to accommodate larger motorhomes. Morisset Showground also caters for long rigs. To capitalise on the strong growth in the caravan and RV markets and the increasing popularity of camping, Lake Macquarie needs additional caravan and camping facilities.

Many of the city's motels, particularly along the Pacific Highway corridor, are ripe for major refurbishment or redevelopment. Some of these properties have prime lakeside sites and may be suitable for higher quality boutique hotel or serviced apartment development. There is also a need for more resort-style accommodation.

With the growth occurring and proposed for the northern areas of the city (from Charlestown through to the North West Growth Precinct), there will be a need for additional corporate hotels and executive serviced apartments to cater for the expected growth in business and sports-related travel. The northern and north-western suburbs are also well positioned to attract 'overflow' business from Newcastle City, particularly from larger events held in the Broadmeadow Sports and Events Precinct; and from large events held in Cessnock and Maitland LGAs.

Limited accommodation on the western side of the lake is a constraint to growing overnight visitation in the western areas of the city.

There are several accommodation projects proposed for the city (see Section 4.6) that will help to address the need for additional quality accommodation and room capacity constraints.





INFRASTRUCTURE - FACILITIES AND SERVICES TO SUPPORT THE VISITOR ECONOMY

Other facilities and infrastructure available to support the city's visitor economy include.

Venues

The city has a multitude of indoor and outdoor venues suitable for a diverse range of business, community, sporting and entertainment events. The city lacks a large multi-purpose conference and performing arts centre.

Information services

The Visitor Information Centre (VIC) in Swansea, supported by the Visit Lake Mac website and social media sites, as well as a range of print collateral and a Tourism Ambassador program.

Eateries

Hotels, licensed clubs, restaurants and cafes spread throughout the city. There is an emerging dining precinct at Warners Bay.

Retail and support services

Ranging from the Charlestown Square regional shopping precinct to historic towns with lifestyle shops. There are also markets held regularly around the lake.

Marine infrastructure

Sailing clubs, marinas, boat ramps, jettys and moorings around the lake. The lake lacks a marine services hub (or hubs) for hire of watercraft, charter boats, tour bookings, lakeside dining etc.

Public toilets

Public toilets are available in each of the towns and in most of the beach and foreshore reserves. Many of the amenity blocks are dated and not fully accessible.

Dump points

Dump points are available in each of the Holiday Parks, with a public dump point at Morisset Showground.

Electric vehicle charging stations

Public charging stations are available at the Lake Macquarie Visitor Information Centre, Speers Point, Warners Bay, Stocklands Glendale and Cameron Park Plaza. The Apollo Hotel and Caves Bar and Bungalows have charging stations for patrons. Council is planning to have charging stations installed in each of the town centres and at Fassifern Station and the Freemans Waterhole service centre¹⁰.

Mobile telephone coverage

Mobile telephone coverage is good throughout most of the city. Coverage is patchy in the Watagan Mountains, with no coverage in some of the picnic and camping areas. The Watagan Mountains is subject to bush fires. The area is also used for outdoor and adventure-based activities which have a higher risk of accidents and misadventure and anti-social behavior is sometimes an issue. Improving mobile phone coverage in the area would improve safety and enable anti-social behaviour to be reported.

¹⁰ Lake Macquarie City (2020) Electric Vehicle Charging Strategy 2020-2023



POSSIBLE CHANGES

Possible changes to the product and infrastructure base that will diversify and strengthen the city's offer and facilitate growth in visitation and expenditure within the city are summarised in Table 4.1.

Lake Macquarie City Council has a range of initiatives underway 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 ongoing 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 to improve the presentation, connectivity and recreation and visitor facilities, consolidating these areas as visitor attractions
- implementing the streetscape 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 to 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 Holiday Park accommodation
- extending the cycle-way network, including completing 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.



Table 4.1 Projects with a tourism component - Mooted and in the pipeline

PROJECT	STATUS	DESCRIPTION	OPPORTUNITIES/POSSIBLE OUTCOMES
Northern and North Western Growth Areas			
Corporate Hotel, Charlestown	Concept – Discussions	Development of a branded international hotel in Charlestown	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Service the corporate and medical markets in the Charlestown and Gateshead area Build the business events market Attract overflow from Newcastle
Gateshead Medical Precinct	Planning and DA	Significant expansion of the Gateshead Private Hospital, medical and specialist suites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Health tourism – servicing residents from regional NSW Medical and allied health business events
Glendale – Cockle Creek	Master planning – Long-term project	Develop a new commercial centre as a major employment zone, with high-density residential and a diversity of retail types, including a corporate hotel/serviced apartments and enhanced recreational and sporting facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The accommodation will strengthen the precinct for businesses looking to establish/relocate Attract business and work-related travellers and business events Support sporting events held at the Hunter Sports Centre and other venues in the north of the city Support the attraction of elite athlete training programs and camps
Expansion of the Hunter Sports Centre	DA approved – Funding confirmed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New athletics and gymnastics building Upgraded track and field infrastructure Trampolining Centre of Excellence Improved presentation, parking and visitor facilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Additional athletics and gymnastics competitions and events Training facilities for elite athletes
Newcastle Basketball Stadium	DA stage	Regional facility with 10 courts and associated facilities with the capacity to host NBL games, major tournaments and exhibition games	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Major basketball events Training facilities and programs
Glencore site	Conceptual	New release area with employment lands, residential, recreation and tourism facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Large site suitable for a major recreation and tourism precinct, which could include accommodation and activities such as a water-based theme park
Sugar Valley Library Museum, Cameron Park	Under construction	Museum – history of coal mining in the West Wallsend area, art works and a mining equipment trail linking to West Wallsend	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use of technology to showcase the mining heritage of the city and to link to historic mining sites within the city

PROJECT	STATUS	DESCRIPTION	OPPORTUNITIES/POSSIBLE OUTCOMES
Eastern side of the lake			
Fernleigh Awabakal Shared Track – FAST Extension	Under construction	Extension of the Fernleigh Track from Belmont, south to Swansea	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to extend the track to Caves Beach and Catherine Hill Bay to the south east and south to link to the Cams Wharf – Raffertys Resort area Extension of the trail from its current terminus, through Belmont to link with the Lake Macquarie foreshore trails Link with the proposed cycling trails in the Belmont Wetlands State Park
Belmont Wetlands State Park	Master plan progressively being implemented – Long-term project	<p>Key elements of the master plan include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> accommodation – primitive camping area initially transitioning to cabins walking and cycling trails including interpretative walks paddling on Belmont Lagoon 4WD access to Nine Mile Beach beach village with eateries, function, meeting and event spaces, tavern, educational facilities 	<p>Prime site with significant development potential and commercial opportunities including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> expansion of the park to include Jewells Swamp, the bushland at Whitebridge (MTB trails) and Belmont Lagoon. high-end boutique accommodation – glamping, eco lodge and/or cabins caravan park/commercial camping area 4WD/quad-bike tours and dune experiences equipment hire – canoes, kayaks, SUPs, bicycles cultural and eco tours ideal location for land-based tours and activities for the cruise ship market out of Newcastle section of the NSW Coastal Trail linking to Redhead, Awabakal Nature Reserve, Glenrock SCA and Bathers Way to the north and through to Blacksmiths in the south
Catherine Hill Bay/Middle Camp	Conceptual	Potential tourism accommodation, attractions and activities	<p>Prime site with significant tourism potential:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> re-purposing and activating the jetty – iconic attraction boutique accommodation diving – reef, jetty and wreck diving experiences – complements and strengthens the city's outdoor, nature and adventure-based activities an additional section of the coastal trail walking and cycle trails linking through to Caves Beach, south to Munmorah SCA and west to Lake Macquarie



PROJECT	STATUS	DESCRIPTION	OPPORTUNITIES/POSSIBLE OUTCOMES
Lake Macquarie Airport	Conceptual	Expansion of hangar, office and visitor facilities to enable existing operators to grow, attract new complementary operators and improve the visitor experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Growth of aviation sports and tourism • Staging area for aviation events • Potential to develop accommodation on adjoining land • All-weather attraction such as indoor sky diving, flight simulator • Potential for a over-water boardwalk linking Naru Beach and Pelican as part of the stabilisation of the western (lakeside) edge of the Airport.
Sails Holiday Park, Belmont	Project underway	Major upgrade of the Sails Holiday Park in Belmont to include sites for large motorhomes and fully accessible accommodation (two cabins, two safari tents) and facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Addresses a gap in the market for sites for large RVs – most caravan parks in the region cannot cater for these vehicles • Additional accessible accommodation in the city – supporting activities such as the sailability program at Belmont
Belmont 16 Foot Sailing Club	Under construction	Upgrading of eateries, revamped conference and function facilities, new event spaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business events • Weddings and functions • Entertainment – night-time destination • Future potential for quality accommodation
Western side of the lake			
Awaba House, Booragul	DA stage	Restoration and adaption of Awaba House for a cafe and function centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weddings and functions • Destination on the foreshore walk
Black Rock Motor Sports Park, Wakefield	Final approval	5.35 kilometre racing circuit, restaurant (100 seats), function space (150 seats), accommodation – 37 units, 64 member units, 20 room lodge, 16 cabins	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focal point for on-site and offsite motorsports events, activities and functions • Hot lap tourism experiences • Possibility of public access days • Car rallies, show and shines, and other club events • Potential to expand facilities to include drag strip, skid pans, learner driver/advanced driving circuits • 4WD park within or in close proximity to the complex • Staging area for rally and rally sprint events on the surrounding rural and forest roads • Filming • Accommodation to support events at other venues (e.g. MTB events at Awaba MTB Park, entertainment events at Cedar Mill)

PROJECT	STATUS	DESCRIPTION	OPPORTUNITIES/POSSIBLE OUTCOMES
Cedar Mill, Morisset	Under construction	Redevelopment of the former Morisset Golf Course for a large outdoor entertainment venue (30,000 people), cafes, accommodation including a caravan and park (300 sites), restaurants, and aqua play park, to be the largest outdoor event space in Australia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large events and festivals • Weddings and functions • Accommodation will support commercial and industrial development (business travel) in the Morisset area and potentially attract transit traffic off the M1 Motorway • Depending on scale, the aqua play park could become an attraction in its own right, similar to the Lake Macquarie Variety Playground
Morisset Showground	Plan of management	Upgrading the showground including the camping area with this area suitable for large motorhomes, and improvements to equestrian and user facilities, with the showground to be used for additional events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grow equestrian and other events • Potential to utilise areas within the precinct for camping and/or parking for large events at Cedar Mill • CMCA and other caravan and RV rallies
Sport and Recreation Centre, Morisset	Site selected, planning studies underway	Development of a new Sport and Recreation Centre to replace Myuna Bay with accommodation, sporting and recreation facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional accommodation supporting activities at Cedar Mill, Morisset Showground, Awaba MTB Park and Black Rock Motor Sports complex • Accommodation for sports-based training camps
Trinity Point Marina hotel and function centre	Stage 2 – seeking amendment to DA	<p>Stage 2: 65 hotel rooms, 150 serviced apartments and function centre on the foreshore at Trinity Point – adjacent to the marina</p> <p>The Developer is seeking approval to amend the DA to increase accommodation to 220 rooms and 218 residential apartments and a 500-seat conference – function centre</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accommodation to support the marina and marine events on the lake • Build the conference, functions and shortbreaks markets • Wedding venue • Work with local marine and seaplane operators to package and value-add • Destination for cruising yachts and motorboats (if the Swansea Channel is upgraded)
Cooranbong Adventure and Eco Tourism Retreat	Plans approved, funding secured	20 eco accommodation units, 60 primitive camp sites, camp kitchen and picnic facilities, amenities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support activities and events in the nearby Watagan Mountains, including the Awaba MTB Park and commercial rock sports activities • Potential to establish an off-road trail linking the Retreat and Awaba MTB Park • Additional accommodation for major events held at BlackRock Motor Park and Cedar Mill



PROJECT	STATUS	DESCRIPTION	OPPORTUNITIES/POSSIBLE OUTCOMES
Awaba Mountain Bike Park expansion of tracks and facilities	Master planned	Extension of the MTB track network including expanding the development track, a large cross country loop track and additional cross country, down hill and adaptive MTB trails; construction of a pump track and skills park; additional amenities, including amenities for people with disabilities; and upgrading the event staging area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Additional events and activities Possibility of using the event staging area to support other types of events in the Watagan Mountains Potential to become a centre for adaptive mountainbiking, including running adaptive events Epic cross country and/or downhill track Potential for trail links to the Coorangbong Eco Resort, Cooranbong and/or Black Rock Motorsports Park; and to one or more railway stations in the surrounding area Potential to for accessible tour operators to develop packages/itineraries/programs which include adaptive mountain biking International MTB designated Epic cross country and/or down hill tracks
Morisset Cultural Hub	Planning	Development of CBD community space, town centre, museum, theatre and commercial area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complement and leverage Cedar Mill
Awaba Conservation Area	Proposal	Proposal to have a large (2000+ hectares) site at Awaba declared a conservation area and developed for a range of outdoor and nature-based activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To provide additional opportunities for outdoor, nature and adventure-based activities Wildlife conservancy for rare and endangered species Potential for trail links between Lake Macquarie foreshore and the Awaba MTB Park, Awaba State Forest, Sugarloaf SCA and Awaba Station Potential for suitable accommodation – e.g. camping, caravan park, eco lodge, glamping cabins etc. Interpretation of Wangi and Eraring Power Stations
Wangi Historic Power Station	Aspirational	Adaptive re-use of the power station for a range of activities including residential and retail with potential for accommodation, arts and cultural activities and events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Short term (in the vacant building) parkor and related urban sports and/or urban exploration tours Major lifestyle and tourism precinct including accommodation, museum/interpretation, galleries, entertainment and events, tavern/boutique beverage producer, lifestyle shopping and activities, conference, meeting and function facilities Cycling and walking links to the Awaba Conservation Area and to Wangi Wangi Point
NSW Waterski Club Training and Event Facility	Conceptual	NSW Waterski Club is looking for a site to establish a waterski training complex and event venue, with the Morisset area identified as a potential location	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focal point for waterski training and events in NSW Potential for adaptive/inclusive waterskiing Event attendees would utilise accommodation on the western side of the lake

PROJECT	STATUS	DESCRIPTION	OPPORTUNITIES/POSSIBLE OUTCOMES
Lake Macquarie			
Ferry tourism service	Pilot project	Lake Macquarie Cruises is trialling an explorer-style hop-on-and-off ferry service, with the ferry stopping at Belmont, Wangi Wangi, Toronto, Booragul and Speers Point	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Opens up opportunities for eateries and lifestyle businesses located in close proximity to the ferry stops Potential product for the coach tour and cruise ship markets Rail-ferry walking and cycling loops (e.g. Fassifern Station – Toronto – Ferry – Booragul – Musuem – Teralba Village and Station) Link walking and cycling tracks around the lake transferring by ferry between track heads
World Air Race	Event planning	Host a round of the World Air Race over Lake Macquarie	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The race will attract significant numbers of spectators to the city Raise awareness and focus attention on aviation tourism experiences at Lake Macquarie Airport Catalyst to establish aviation events
Sailing School of Excellence	Aspirational	Establish an elite training facility for sailing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leverage the facility to generate media coverage and raise the profile of Lake Macquarie as a sailing destination Host activities and events including international, national and state regattas
Site yet to be determined			
Conference and Performing Arts Centre	Feasibility Study 2022	A large, multi-purpose conference and performing arts centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Business events including conferences, meetings, functions and exhibitions Entertainment precinct



IMPLICATIONS FOR TOURISM IN LAKE MACQUARIE CITY

Likely outcomes from the realisation of these projects and Council initiatives include:

- re-invigoration of the coastal strip, with the development of the Belmont Wetlands State Park and the Catherine Hill Bay precinct being catalytic projects which, if they proceed, significantly improve and diversify the product offering and visitor experience.
- increased use of Lake Macquarie and adjoining foreshore areas; improving the Swansea Channel and other marine infrastructure will enable the city to become a destination for the touring yacht and motor cruiser markets and improve safety for the recreational boating and fishing markets; other initiatives, such as the introduction of a ferry service, establishment of a Sailing School of Excellence, a venue for water-ski training and events and marine hubs, will increase the level of activity on the lake.
- significant increase in visitation in the western and north-western areas of the city, with this driven in part by large events at Cedar Mill, Black Rock Motorsports Park and Morisset Showground, and potentially at the Awaba MTB park and the proposed Sailing School of Excellence and NSW Waterski Club training and event facilities.
- substantial enhancement, growth and diversification of the outdoor, nature and adventure-based attractions, activities and experiences throughout the city, strengthening and consolidating Lake Macquarie as an outdoor and adventure destination.
- a far more vibrant city, with a strong tier of arts and cultural attractions and experiences including an active night-time economy.
- a greater capacity (in terms of locations, venues and accommodation) to host business, entertainment, sporting and community festivals and events.
- significant increase in the accommodation available across the city, including much needed four and five star, contemporary accommodation and corporate hotels.
- increase in accessible tourism attractions, activities and experiences across the city, supported by increased accessible accommodation, infrastructure and facilities.
- through the extension of walking and cycling trails and public transport corridors, greater connectivity, both within the city and between the city and adjoining LGAs, with the walking and cycling trails becoming part of the city's attraction and activity base.

STRENGTH AND STRATEGIC ASSETS

From a tourism perspective, Lake Macquarie's strengths and strategic assets and the opportunities they provide are summarised in Table 5.1

Table 5.1 Strengths, strategic assets and possible opportunities for Lake Macquarie City

STRENGTHS	ASSETS TO WORK WITH	POSSIBLE OPPORTUNITIES
Location/ Proximity	<p>Proximity to major population centres:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Readily accessible from Sydney, Central Coast and Hunter with about 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 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lake Macquarie is well positioned to attract day trips, short breaks and holiday-makers • Ready market for events and activities • Leverage regional media opportunities to raise the profile of Lake Macquarie in the Hunter and Central Coast regions. • Assess feasibility of promoting at consumer shows (e.g. boating, fishing, caravanning etc) in the Sydney, Upper Hunter and Central Coast areas
	<p>Proximity to high profile locations/destinations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Central Coast • Newcastle • Hunter Wine Country • Port Stephens 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attract day trips from VFR and other visitors staying in surrounding LGAs • Potential to package some activities (e.g. skydiving) with activities in surrounding destinations • Cooperative marketing of high-profile adventure, nature and outdoor activities within the Lower Hunter to the international adventure-seeking market • Promote surrounding attractions/experiences as part of the attraction base of Lake Macquarie, with the city positioned as a 'hub' to explore the Lower Hunter and Central Coast.
Highly accessible	<p>Road:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 <p>Rail:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore potential for improved RMS/tourist signage along the M1 Motorway corridor • Explore options for a promotional display/information stand at the M1 Service Centre just north of Wyong (for north-bound travellers) • Ensure the city's promotional material is available in VICs along the highway corridors that feed into the Lower Hunter • Marketing into the lower New England North West and the Central NSW – Orana regions, possibly including bill board advertising along the highway corridors and exhibiting at consumer shows (e.g. caravan and camping) in the Upper Hunter, Dubbo and Tamworth
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote rail access/run 'special event' trains to Morisset for large events at Cedar Mill, Morisset Showground, Black Rock Motor Sports Park and other venues • Walking/cycling routes linking stations and attractions • Where cycleways link to stations, introduce Newcastle's 'ebike on demand' (or similar) program to key stations in Lake Macquarie. • Seek to have city content and events included in the Newcastle and Hunter pages of the Transport for NSW Intercity/NSW Trains website • Promote rail access for mountain biking, working with local MTB transfer operators to collect from railway stations; could be packaged with Council's proposed Eco Retreat at Cooranbong • Rail-stay-explore packages for retirees, Probus and other groups utilising low-cost train fares • VFT will enable regional and interstate travellers to stay in Lake Macquarie and visit Sydney (lower cost, easy logistics option)

STRENGTHS	ASSETS TO WORK WITH	POSSIBLE OPPORTUNITIES
Highly accessible cont.	<p>Air – domestic and international gateways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 30 minutes from Newcastle Airport with significant growth 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 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fly-drive-stay packages for the domestic and international markets Attract campervan rental market Leverage air access to secure business, sporting and other events
	<p>Sea:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Swansea Channel providing access to the lake for smaller yachts and motor boats 30 minutes from the Port of Newcastle Cruise berth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improving the Swansea Channel would enable Lake Macquarie to become part of the East Coast touring yacht and motor cruiser route and also attract shorter trips from boats moored in the area from Port Stephens through to the Illawarra region Host/attract ocean-going sailing and fishing events Provide activities (e.g. adventure, Aboriginal cultural experiences) as part of cruise ship itineraries
	<p>Other regional links:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bus services, cycleways and shared pathways linking Lake Macquarie with some adjoining LGAs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthen links to build the day visitor market Some cycleways and shared pathways have the potential to become part of the city's attraction and activity base
Lake Macquarie	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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, tours Extensive lakeside reserves and foreshore areas supporting recreation and events Cultural and heritage sites around the lake foreshore and islands 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement the Lake Activation Strategy and Master Plans for key localities (e.g. Toronto Foreshore, Rathmines), with the priority being to establish one or more activity hubs Improve the safety of the Swansea Channel to facilitate growth in the touring yacht and boat market and enable Lake Macquarie to stage/attract ocean-going events Lakeside accommodation and dining Package the new ferry/explorer service for coach tour and other groups Training and event facilities including the Sailing School of Excellence, NSW Water Ski Club facilities Boating, sailing and paddling opportunities and facilities (and potentially events) for people with disabilities – adaptive/inclusive sports Continue to develop lakeside heritage and cultural attractions
Unique and diverse natural and outdoor assets	<p>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, with key assets including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outdoor, adventure and nature-based activities Utilise assets for events and activities Leverage opportunities for commercial activities

STRENGTHS	ASSETS TO WORK WITH	POSSIBLE OPPORTUNITIES
Unique and diverse natural and outdoor assets cont.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Air sports including skydiving and aerobatics Jet Buzz – jet boat Boating, sailing and fishing charters and tours Cycling, mountain biking, gravel grinding Water sports/paddling Scuba diving Trail running Rock sports Black Rock Motor Park (proposed) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased packaging and promotion to strengthen and consolidate Lake Macquarie as a destination for outdoor and adventure-based activities Adrenaline experiences at the Motor Park (e.g. hot laps) Events, including multi-sports such as adventure racing
Sporting venues and facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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, Newcastle Basketball Stadium) Range of localities (beaches, lake, forests, airport) suitable for niche sporting events, like adventure racing, 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 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with sporting clubs and associations and venue managers to bid for events Develop events locally Promote venues in Lake Macquarie to commercial event organisers Leverage the proposed motor sports park to attract/develop motoring events (e.g. rally sprint in the State Forests) Attract elite sports programs, training, camps etc. Develop/host adaptive/inclusive sporting activities and events
Large and/or under-performing sites potentially suitable for a range of tourism and recreation activities	<p>Including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that tourism opportunities are taken into consideration in assessing the potential of these sites and in developing concept/master plans

ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

Addressing challenges and removing barriers is fundamental to delivering ongoing 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"> Addressing the confusion between Lake Macquarie and Port Macquarie, with search engines often listing Port Macquarie sites alongside Lake Macquarie sites 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 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 Raising the visibility of Lake Macquarie along the M1 Motorway
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"> Evolving lakeside centres into strong tourism precincts Encouraging visitor dispersal around the lake – raising the profile and visibility of the attractions and activities on the western side of the lake Attracting investment in accommodation on the western side of the lake to support projects such as Cedar Mill Managing traffic congestion on the road link (Esplanade - Macquarie Drive – Croudace Bay Road) between the eastern and western side of the lake
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 LMC, the surrounding region and the Greater Sydney Region.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 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 Finding additional funds and resources to the area
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.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Differentiating Lake Macquarie in an increasingly competitive market: 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. 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. Shellharbour and Cessnock LGAs have air sports operators and are actively promoting aviation-based adventure experiences. Dungog Shire is a popular destination for mountain biking, cycling, bush camping, bushwalking and 4WD-trail bike touring, an alternative to the Watagans.

ISSUE	CHALLENGES
Seasonality – strong summer peak; visitation concentrated on weekends.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Growing shoulder and off-season visitation, particularly mid-week
Accommodation constraints: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> limited number of branded hotels/resorts and larger properties tired/dated budget to mid-market motels loss of caravan park accommodation limited sites for large RVs very limited accommodation on the western side of the lake. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Addressing capacity constraints to facilitate growth of the events sector Stopping leakage to branded/corporate hotel properties in surrounding LGAs, particularly for the business travel, conferences and meetings and high-yield markets Managing and leveraging short-term rental properties (AirBnB, Stayz etc.) Attracting investment in new accommodation Meeting the growing demand for caravan, RV and camping sites
Lake Macquarie not achieving its full potential.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attractions and activities are dispersed – there are no marine tourism hubs Significantly improving the safety of the Swansea Channel to accommodate ocean-going vessels Removing barriers (including red-tape) to the utilisation of the lake and foreshore areas for a broad range of activities, including commercial activities Attracting public and private sector investment in marine infrastructure (e.g. additional moorings, marinas, jetties and pontoons)
Limited non-natural attractions, dining precincts and evening and night time economies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improving signage throughout the city
Lack of a large conference and performing arts centre.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gaining traction in the business events market without a high-profile venue Competition from venues in the surrounding region
Bringing potential development sites online.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consolidating sites which are in multiple ownership Cost of rehabilitating sites (e.g. removing contamination, mine grouting) to enable sites to be developed Cost of providing enabling infrastructure (e.g. road, power) Ensuring that the potential for tourism and recreation are taken into consideration in the assessment and planning of these sites



VISITATION TO LAKE MACQUARIE

VISITATION

Tourism Research Australia (TRA) publishes visitation data for the region and for selected LGAs. Data on visitation to the Hunter Region and additional information on visitation to Lake Macquarie is given in Section 6 of the Support Document.

Time series data is available for Lake Macquarie for 2010-2020, with the data for each year based on a four-year rolling average. 2019 is a more 'normal' year as visitation in 2020 was impacted by the COVID-19 travel restrictions.

In 2019, Lake Macquarie attracted 1.365 million visitors, of whom 411,000 were domestic overnight visitors, 11,000 were international travellers and 943,000 were domestic day visitors. From 2010-2019 visitation to Lake Macquarie increased by 50.6 per cent, with domestic overnight and day visitors increasing by 52.7 per cent and 49.8 per cent respectively, and international visitors by 39.7 per cent.

2019

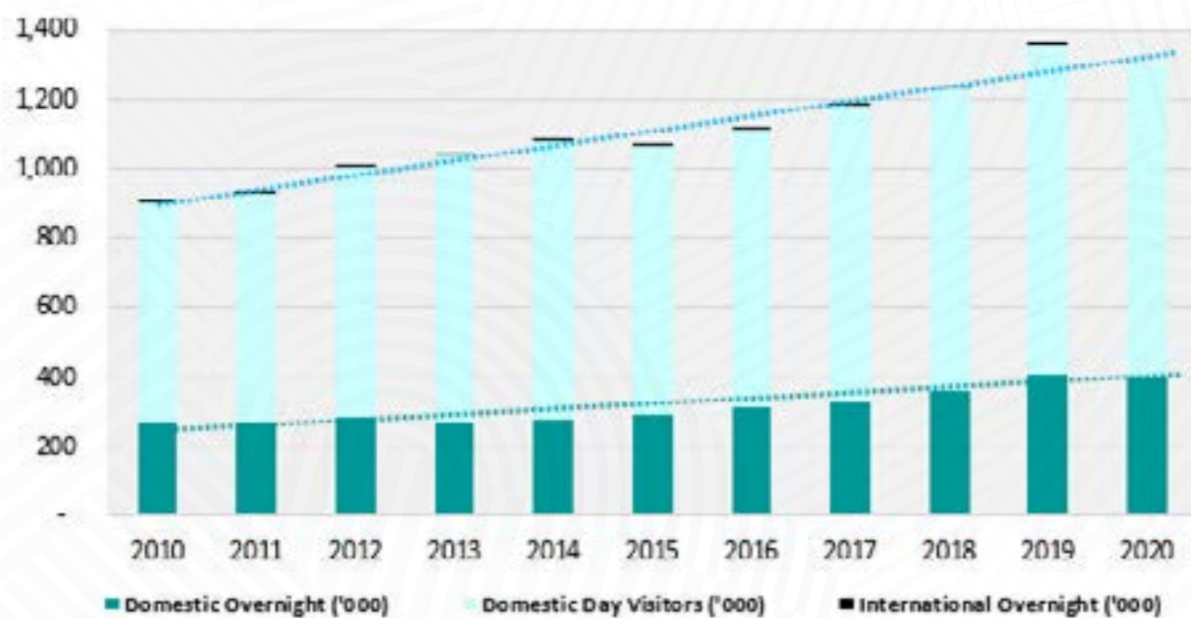
1.365M VISITORS

1.155M NIGHTS

\$209.78M SPEND

AVERAGE STAY 2.74 NIGHTS

Figure 7.1 Change in visitation ('000) to Lake Macquarie City, 2010-2020 (four-year rolling average)



Source: TRA (2020)

Over the same period, the number of visitor nights spent in Lake Macquarie increased by 33.9 per cent to 1.155 million nights. 89.2 per cent of nights were generated by domestic visitors and 10.8 per cent by international visitors. Domestic overnight visitors stayed on average 2.6 nights, with international visitors staying 11.6 nights.

In 2020, international travel ceased, and the number of domestic overnight and day visitors declined by 2.6 per cent and five per cent respectively, with visitor nights declining by 0.4 per cent. (Note: yearly figures are based on a four-year rolling average, and as such performance in 2017-2019 'masks' the significant downturn in 2020).

Key metrics for domestic overnight and day visitors in 2019 are summarised below:

- Domestic overnight visitors spent on average \$119.70 per visitor per night, while domestic day trippers spent on average \$86 per person per trip. Expenditure figures are well below the Hunter Region, which in 2019, achieved an average spend of \$171 per domestic overnight visitor per night and \$102 per day visitor.
- Visitors from NSW generated 91.5% per cent of visits and 87.6 per cent of nights, with the average length of stay being 2.4 nights. Interstate visitors

generated 8.5 per cent of visits and 12.5 per cent of nights and stayed on average 3.7 nights in Lake Macquarie.

- Visiting friends and relatives (VFR) is a significant driver of visitation to Lake Macquarie, with 48.4 per cent of domestic overnight visitors and 32.1 per cent of day visitors being VFR travellers. 37.2 per cent of overnight visitors and half of day visitors were travelling for holidays and leisure, while 14.4 per cent of overnight visitors and 17.8 per cent of day trippers were travelling for business and other purposes.
- From 2014-2019, Lake Macquarie saw strong growth in holiday and leisure travel, with the number of overnight holiday and leisure travellers and nights spent in the city up 59.4 per cent and 42.4 per cent respectively. The number of overnight and day visitors visiting friends and relatives increased by 23.6 per cent and 8.6 per cent respectively. The number of business travellers who stayed overnight in Lake Macquarie increased significantly (up 157.6 per cent) albeit off a small base, while the number of day visitors travelling for business decreased by 10.5 per cent.
- Lake Macquarie City is popular with the Baby Boomer market, with 39.4 per cent of domestic overnight travellers and 40.7 per cent of day visitors, aged 55 years or older.

- Nearly a third, (32.8 per cent) of domestic overnight visitors are travelling as adult couples with 31.6 per cent being solo travellers, 17.5 per cent travelling as families with children and 15.8 per cent with friends and/or family members. From 2014-2019, there was strong growth in the number of people travelling solo (up 71.1 per cent), as adult couples (up 58.8 per cent) and with friends/family (up 47.4 per cent). In contrast, the number of people travelling as a family unit showed only marginal growth (up 1.4 per cent).
- More than half, (55.3 per cent) of nights are spent in the homes of friends and relatives, with nine per cent in motels and hotels, 8.4 per cent in caravan parks and 27.1 per cent in other types of accommodation. From 2014-2019, nights spent in motels and hotels increased by 111.4 per cent while nights spent with friends and relatives and in other accommodation increased by 28.7 per cent and 22.9 per cent respectively. In contrast, the number of nights spent in caravan parks decreased by 32.6 per cent. Given that the figures are based on a four-year rolling average, this is likely to reflect the reduction in the number of caravan parks within Lake Macquarie.



SOURCE MARKETS

The Lake Macquarie City accommodation reservation system provides information on the origin of booking and the number of nights booked. While this information is not statistically valid, it provides an indication of the source markets. The booking information has been aggregated for the period 2010 to June 2021.

Residents of the Central Coast and Hunter regions generated 8.6 per cent of bookings and 8.3 per cent of booked nights in Lake Macquarie. Sydney was the main source market, with 44.8 per cent of bookings and 39.4 per cent of nights, with Regional NSW (excluding the Hunter and Central Coast)

generating 19.7 per cent of bookings and 19.6 per cent of nights. Interstate visitors generated 21.4 per cent of bookings and 26.4 per cent of nights, while international visitors generated 1.3 per cent of bookings and 2.5 per cent of nights.

International visitors had the longest length of stay (5.1 nights), followed by interstate visitors (3.2 nights) with Sydney-siders having the shortest length of stay (2.3 nights). Interstate bookings were mainly from Queenslanders and Victorians, with visitors from the United Kingdom generating most of the international bookings.

Lake Macquarie drew bookings from across the Sydney Region, with the North Shore-Upper North Shore-Hills corridor generating the most bookings and nights, followed by Western Sydney and South Western Sydney. Within regional NSW, the primary source markets are the Central Coast and Hunter regions, followed by Central NSW, the North Coast and New England – North West Region. Within Central NSW, Lake Macquarie draws primarily from the regional cities of Dubbo, Orange and Bathurst, and the LGAs along the Golden Highway corridor. Lake Macquarie is one of the most accessible coastal destinations to these localities. From the North Coast, Lake Macquarie mainly draws from the Mid Coast and Hastings (Port Macquarie) LGAs, which are within three hours drive of Lake Macquarie. The majority of visitors from the New England – North West region are from Tamworth, Liverpool Plains and Gunnedah LGAs, with the New England Highway providing easy access to Lake Macquarie from these areas.

Figure 7.2 Origin of bookings and nights – Lake Macquarie City Reservation System – Aggregated data 2020-2021



Table 7.1 Breakdown of bookings and nights by source/region – Lake Macquarie City Reservation System 2010-2021

REGION	BOOKINGS	NIGHTS	AVERAGE STAY
Greater Sydney			
North Shore – Hills	8.6%	8.1%	2.45
Western Sydney	8.5%	6.9%	2.12
South Western Sydney	7.0%	6.6%	2.46
Southern (Sutherland/St George)	5.5%	4.6%	2.27
CBD – Eastern Suburbs	4.3%	3.7%	2.24
Inner West	3.9%	3.6%	2.45
Lower North Shore	3.9%	3.1%	2.10
Northern Beaches	3.4%	2.7%	2.07
Total Sydney	44.8%	39.4%	2.29
Regional NSW			
Central Coast – Hunter	8.6%	8.3%	2.52
Central NSW – Orana	4.9%	5.9%	3.16
North Coast	4.6%	4.0%	2.27
New England – North West	3.9%	3.6%	2.43
Illawarra – South Coast	2.5%	2.7%	2.81
Capital Country (ACT surrounds)	1.5%	1.5%	2.61
Blue Mountains	1.5%	1.2%	2.1
Riverina – Murray – Snowy	0.8%	0.7%	2.17
Total regional NSW	28.3%	27.9%	2.57
Interstate			
Queensland	7.5%	9.0%	3.13
Victoria	7.3%	9.5%	3.41
ACT	3.1%	2.9%	2.49
South Australia	1.5%	1.8%	3.16
Western Australia	1.0%	1.7%	4.23
Tasmania	0.8%	1.3%	4.31
Northern Territory	0.4%	0.3%	1.75
Total interstate	21.4%	26.4%	3.20
International			
United Kingdom	0.7%	1.3%	4.67
USA	0.3%	0.9%	7.14
Europe	0.1%	0.3%	5.33
Other	0.1%	0.06%	1.50
Total international	1.3%	2.5%	5.12
Not stated	4.2%	3.9%	2.38

MARKETS ATTRACTED TO LAKE MACQUARIE CITY

TRADITIONAL VOLUME MARKETS

Lake Macquarie has six traditional, well-established markets that generate significant numbers of visitors for the city:

Visiting friends and relatives (VFR) including visitors coming into Lake Macquarie for weddings, funerals and other social events. VFR is Lake Macquarie's largest visitor market with more than 500,000 visitors a year coming to the city to visit friends and/or relatives¹². Surrounding LGAs also have significant VFR market segments (more than 4.3 million VFR visitors). In relation to 'where to stay', 'what to do' and 'where to go', the VFR market is strongly influenced by recommendations from their hosts. Events also influence when people visit. The VFR market will increase in line with population growth.

School holiday family market attracted by the lake and the beaches. The family market is drawn primarily from Sydney, Central Coast, Hunter and parts of the Central West and New England-North West regions of NSW. Visitation is concentrated in the summer school holidays, with secondary peaks in the spring and autumn school holidays and at Easter. Families are a significant market for the caravan parks and holiday lettings properties. In the past, many families had permanent holiday vans in the city's caravan parks, however with caravan parks closing and the Holiday Parks scaling back the number of holiday vans, this market has largely

been lost. There has also been a reduction in the availability of affordable (budget to mid-market) holiday letting properties within the city.

With the change in marketing directions (see below), Lake Macquarie is seeing a shift in the family market, with the area attracting more families taking weekend (short) breaks throughout the year as well as more families camping and pursuing outdoor activities, particularly in the Watagan Mountains.

Retirees, primarily with their own caravans, staying in the city's caravan parks. Retirees have traditionally been a significant shoulder and off-season market, with visitors coming specifically to the area for activities such as fishing, prawning and boating on the lake. This market is changing, with the city seeing an increasing number of touring caravans and RVs with retirees visiting the area as part of a longer touring holiday. As such, the length of stay is decreasing. The number of travellers looking for free and low cost (e.g. showground, RV parks) sites is also increasing.

Sporting event market, primarily junior sports. Lake Macquarie and Newcastle are popular destinations for major sporting carnivals and events, with Lake Macquarie very successful in attracting large junior sporting events. Due to its accessibility to the sporting venues, good supply of affordable

accommodation (caravan parks cabins, budget to mid-market motels, and holiday lets), shopping and attractions, a lot of attendees choose to stay in Lake Macquarie rather than Newcastle. Significant investment is occurring in upgrading and expanding sporting facilities and venues, bidding to host events and developing new events. This will translate into ongoing growth in sports-based visitation.

Residents from the surrounding region – Lake Macquarie is a popular destination for residents of the Hunter Valley and Central Coast. The opening of the Hunter Expressway has increased the accessibility of Lake Macquarie to residents of Cessnock and Maitland and LGAs in the Upper Hunter. The main attractions for regional residents are the beaches, the lake, Charlestown Square, the Variety Playground at Speers Point, the Watagan Mountains and some of the city's events. Travel patterns depend on lifecycle stage, with retirees more likely to visit mid-week, while younger couples, social groups and families primarily travel on weekends, with families also visiting during school holidays.

Business and work-related travellers – Business and work-related travel are a high-yield market, with visitor numbers largely determined by construction projects, economic activities and business events held within the city.

EMERGING MARKETS

Over the past five years, changes in the city's marketing directions have resulted in the emergence of outdoor and adventure-based travel and strong growth in the events market.

Outdoor, nature and adventure-based visitors – In 2017, Destination NSW in conjunction with Council's Tourism team audited the products and experiences available within Lake Macquarie and assessed opportunities for growing and diversifying the visitor market. The research identified 'Outdoor – Adventure – under 45 years' as a key target market for the city. Council adopted a new marketing approach with a strong focus on showcasing the city's outdoor setting and natural attractions and the outdoor, adventure and nature-based activities that can be undertaken. This has resulted in strong growth in day trips and short breaks from the Millennial and Gen Z markets. The new imagery and focus have also stimulated growth in the short breaks market across a range of segments including families, active over 55s, and informal social groups. Operators also report an increase in the number of solo and small groups of female travellers aged 40 years or older.

Event attendees – Implementation of Council's Event and Festival Strategy is resulting in the growth of existing events and the introduction of new events across the city, with these events driving growth in both day and overnight visitation.

The publicity generated by these events is also raising the profile and increasing awareness of the city.

Accessible/Inclusive tourism – Initiatives from Council to provide inclusive accommodation and access to attractions and facilities coupled with marketing activities is resulting in growth in the accessible tourism market, albeit from a very small base.

SECONDARY AND MINOR MARKETS

Secondary and minor markets attracted to Lake Macquarie include:

- highway travellers/passing traffic coming off the M1 Motorway to access services and/or look around.
- coach tour groups
- international visitors
- social groups such as Probus clubs and car clubs
- special interest and activity-based markets including visitors coming to Lake Macquarie to pursue an interest (e.g. art) or participate in an activity (e.g. surfing, mountain biking, golf)
- health including regional NSW residents visiting Lake Macquarie Private Hospital, with this market to grow with the expansion and diversification of the Gateshead health precinct.

DIRECTIONS FORWARD

- Continue to focus on building the 'Outdoor – Adventure – under 45 years' market. As part of this, target niche and activity-based markets (e.g. surfers, mountain-bikers).
- Maintain and grow the existing primary markets, strengthening what this market loves and introducing new products and experiences.
- Continue to leverage events and cultural programs to drive visitation and grow the regional day trip market, focusing on the shoulder and off-season periods.
- Grow 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, launch Lake Macquarie as a destination for business events.

¹² TRA Lake Macquarie LGA Visitor Profile 2019. A total of 505,256 VFR visitors



CHANGES OCCURRING IN THE MARKETPLACE

There are a multitude of changes occurring in the marketplace that are influencing travel patterns and creating opportunities. Key changes with implications for Lake Macquarie are summarised below and discussed in Section 7 of the Resource Document.

CHANGING TRAVEL PATTERNS

The impact of COVID-19: The pandemic has severely disrupted domestic and international travel. While domestic and international borders have re-opened, COVID-19 is expected to have an ongoing impact on international and domestic travel over the few years. Tourism Research Australia (TRA) is forecasting that VFR and business travel markets will recover more quickly than the holiday and leisure travel market¹³. It also notes that the economic impact of the lockdown on many households may curtail travel in the short to medium-term or change travel patterns with travellers looking for lower cost options, such as camping. On the plus side, the COVID-19 lockdown has encouraged people to exercise and 'rediscover' the outdoors, with people taking up cycling, bushwalking and other activities.

Lake Macquarie has many of the characteristics and assets that travellers are looking for – it is close to major population centres; offers coast, lake and mountain environments; fresh air; is relatively uncrowded compared to Sydney; provides opportunities for cost-effective short breaks and holidays (e.g. camping); and offers a range of outdoor activities.

Growth in regional travel: Prior to COVID-19, both Tourism Australia and DNSW were implementing strategies to build international and domestic travel to regional areas. As a result of COVID-19, TRA is predicting strong growth in domestic visitation to regional areas.

Experiences are driving visitation: Domestic holiday choices are increasingly being driven by experiences, rather than decisions solely based on a specific state or region. Marketing being undertaken by Tourism Australia and DNSW is encouraging Australians to 'holiday like a tourist'

¹³ Tourism Research Australia (2020) Moving Forward: The Role of Domestic Travel in Australia's Tourism Recovery



by not just visiting a destination, but actively experiencing it by trying out local tourism activities such as surf lessons, walking tours, winery tasting or museum visit on their next trip.

Increase in multi-generational and informal group travel: Growth is being driven by families looking to re-connect; the high propensity for Gen Xer's and Millennials to meet up as informal social groups particularly for short breaks and long weekends; strong preference among some ethnic communities to travel as extended family groups; and people coming together to undertake activities (e.g. bushwalking, mountain biking, paddling).

'Force for good': according to TRA, travellers are increasingly seeking out brands and experiences that are not only good for them, but good for the world around them. There may opportunities in Lake Macquarie (e.g. restoration of the Belmont Wetlands precinct) to leverage this interest.

CHANGING MARKETS

Changes occurring in the marketplace that have implications and/or offer opportunities for Lake Macquarie include:

Growth in the Baby Boomer market: Baby Boomers are generally healthy and active and are seeking new places, different lifestyles, soft-adventure and new experiences with the most appealing experiences are nature and outdoors based (56 per cent); touring by car – sightseeing (51 per cent); relaxation, health and indulgence (43 per cent); and food and wine (35 per cent).

Families looking to reconnect with each other and with 'nature': A domestic holiday is an opportunity for families to relax, have a 'safe' adventure and reconnect. Families have a high propensity to undertake outdoor and nature-based activities (52 per cent) and to participate in sports and active outdoor activities (29 per cent) and visit local attractions (27 per cent). 'Digital detox', opportunities for the children to 'learn,' and nostalgia (wanting their children to experience the holidays that they experienced as a child) are also motivators.

Emergence of the youth market: The youth market (defined as travellers aged 15-29 years) is one of the fastest growing visitor markets¹⁴. In selecting destinations, the youth market seeks out experiences, particularly those that are unique, immersive, challenging and/or contribute to personal knowledge and development. They have an appetite for risk and a strong interest in environmentally sustainability.

Strong growth in the caravan and RV markets: The caravan and RV markets have been growing strongly, with growth forecast to continue. An increasing number of caravanners are travelling with pets (mainly dogs) and seek out places that are dog friendly. There is also an increase in people travelling with bicycles and/or kayaks who are looking for places to ride and/or paddle.

¹⁴ Information in this section taken from the Destination NSW Webinar on the Youth Market and from TNS Domesticate 2016.



Growth in nature-based¹⁵ travel: Pre-COVID 19, NSW was experiencing very strong growth in the number of domestic overnight visitors and day trippers who travelled to undertake nature-based (nature, outdoors, adventure) activities. COVID-19 has further stimulated interest in outdoor activities. Nature-based travellers are often looking to challenge themselves through physical activities and/or by learning new skills. Lake Macquarie is well endowed with outdoor, adventure and nature-based assets that will appeal to this market, with opportunities for development of additional commercial product.

Emergence of the accessible/inclusive/adaptive tourism market: The introduction of the *NSW Disability Inclusion Act 2014* and the *NSW Disability Inclusion Plan 2015* seeks to ensure that people with disability have the right to full and effective participation in society while the introduction of

the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), has provided scheme participants with greater opportunity for travel and participation in activities, with the scheme funding travel and recreation for both the person with the disability and their carer/s.

Lake Macquarie has a range of attractions, experiences and accommodation properties (see Section 4.3) suitable for the accessible tourism market, with the opportunity to position the city as a destination for adaptive outdoor and adventure-based activities and events.

Growth in the Asian market: There has been unprecedented growth in the middle class across Asia. In 2020, the size of the Asian middle class was an estimated two billion people, with the number forecast to rise to 3.5 billion by 2030. Both Newcastle and Western Sydney Airports are looking to attract the low-cost airlines which will result in

strong growth in the Asian market. This will be a growth market when international travel returns.

Growth in agritourism: Encouraging and facilitating the development of agritourism is part of State and Federal Government initiatives to build resilience in rural communities. The NSW Government is amending the planning legislation to expand the range of tourism activities permitted in rural areas and streamline the approval process.

The rise in the ‘share economy’ and changes in building materials and technologies is also broadening opportunities for agritourism (see Section 8.3). The share economy provides opportunities for home sharing, on-farm camping, and activities such as cook and dine with a local, locally hosted tours, animal encounters and adventures (e.g. mountain biking).

CHANGING TECHNOLOGY

New technology is changing the tourism industry. Digital technology provides significant opportunity for information delivery, communication, marketing and promotion, and for enhancing the visitor experience. It also enables growth in the ‘shared economy’ and provides opportunities for new activities and businesses. Changing technology requires an investment in infrastructure and training. Opportunities include:

Information delivery, marketing and promotion: Target communications, across a variety of platforms at all stages in the path to purchase, and during the journey.

Storytelling: The use of virtual and augmented reality to promote destinations visually and through ‘storytelling’; enabling ‘virtual’ access to remote and/or highly sensitive areas; and enhancing visitor experiences by adding additional ‘layers’ of information.

The rise in the share economy:

Providing options for home sharing (e.g. AirBnB, Couch Surfing), farm camping (e.g. Hipcamp, Under the Stars), ride sourcing (e.g. Uber, Go Get), tours (e.g. AirBnB tours by locals) and more recently dining options (dine with a local).

Changes in building materials and technologies:

Resulting in different types of accommodation (e.g. bubble tents, tiny houses) and the ability to go ‘off grid’ which is enabling accommodation to be situated in remote and/or environmentally-sensitive locations and relocated quickly (e.g. during flooding, bushfires) if needed.

Introduction of electric vehicles: Over the next decade, the number of electric cars in Australia is forecast to grow by 28 per cent a year and reach 20 per cent of new car sales by 2030¹⁶. This will create the need for additional charging infrastructure. Electric bicycles are enabling more people to participate in cycling and mountain biking.



¹⁵ DNSW defines nature-based travel as travel for the purposes of undertaking outdoor or nature-based activities, including bushwalking, going to the beach, cycling, adventure sports and activities, golf, birdwatching and wildlife viewing.

¹⁶ need the footnote for this. was not available in Word doc

DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT AND MANAGEMENT

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.

DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

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 2.2 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 provide focal points for lake tours and charters, boat and water craft hire, and lakeside dining and entertainment. 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 Rathmines area, 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.

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)¹

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.

¹ 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.

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, chill-out

Have an adventure: explore, discover, challenge yourself.

KEY ATTRIBUTES

Stunning setting: spectacular coastline, glistening healthy lake, rugged mountains, National Parks, State Conservation Areas, 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, contemporary dining

Accessible, Affordable.

DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

PRIORITIES:

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)

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. Areas of focus:

- National Parks, State Conservation Areas and Nature Reserves
- State Forests
- walking/bushwalking
- sailing
- cycling
- mountain biking
- paddling
- rock sports
- golf
- motor sports on land and water.

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:

- place-making, activation and storytelling – 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.

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.

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 enabling infrastructure for decommissioned coal and power station sites to release land for new development.

Industry development – build skills and capacity

Build skills and capacity within the tourism and hospitality sectors.

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.

STRATEGY PRIORITY 1: THE POTENTIAL OF KEY LOCALITIES IS REALISED

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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
- Rathmines
- Wangi Wangi - Awaba Conservation Area (proposed).

The potential of these precincts is discussed in the following sections.

Figure 10.1 Existing visitor precincts being enhanced by Council and localities that have the potential to become significant visitor precincts



FURTHER ACTIVATE LAKE MACQUARIE

Lake Macquarie is central to the identity and branding of Council, with the lake and lakeside reserves being significant attractions which support a broad range of commercial businesses, tourism and recreational activities, and events. Activating the lake and surrounding foreshores has been identified in the previous DMP's and in other Council plans and strategies as a priority for the city.

Council has recently adopted the Lake Macquarie Activation Strategy 2020-2030 to provide the framework for increasing the use of the lake and foreshore areas while protecting the marine and terrestrial habitats. The strategy focuses on opportunities that can be realised with the Swansea Channel in its current condition. From a tourism perspective, the priority actions within this strategy are:

- establishing marine tourism 'hubs' at strategic locations around the lake, with these hubs supporting a range of commercial activities including boat and equipment hire and food and beverage outlets
- improving infrastructure and removing regulatory barriers to the use of the lake and foreshore areas for a broad range of events and activities
- establishing a national 'Sailing School of Excellence'
- continued improvements of marine and foreshore infrastructure and facilities
- ongoing development of key tourism precincts (e.g. Rathmines, Toronto Foreshore), attractions and activities on and around the lake.

OPPORTUNITIES

In addition to the projects, attractions and activities identified in the Lake Activation Strategy and Resource Document, consideration should also be given to:

- The opportunities that would be created by significantly improving the safety of Swansea Channel and providing access for larger/deeper keel vessels. This would enable Council to attract the touring yacht and motor cruiser markets and attract and/or introduce ocean-going sailing events and deep-sea fishing competitions. It may also enable a high-speed cruise or ferry service between Lake Macquarie and Newcastle, Port Stephens, Central Coast and Sydney. Additional marina facilities and moorings will be needed to support these activities.
- Leveraging, through public art and interpretation, the size of the lake – the largest permanent saltwater lake in the Southern Hemisphere. Although this is featured in the marketing of the city there is no on-ground 'visual statement' information or 'photo' opportunity to 'mark' this.
- Large marina development incorporating a large dry stack storage facility, boat repairs and servicing and accommodation. This would capitalise on the increasing pressure to remove trailable boats from streets in the Greater Sydney region (e.g. Oram's Marine Village in Auckland, New Zealand).
- In addition to the Sailing School of Excellence, opportunities to establish other sports training facilities (e.g. the 'mooted' NSW Waterski Association training and event facility).
- Building on existing activities (e.g. Sailability programs and inclusive paddling) to position Lake Macquarie as a destination for inclusive and adaptive on-water sport activities and events.

TOURISM-RELATED PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES IDENTIFIED IN THE LAKE ACTIVATION STRATEGY:

- Marine activity hubs
- Foreshore and on-water dining
- Sailing School of Excellence
- Lakeside accommodation
- Water park
- Night fountain with sound and light show
- Night water sculpture event
- Underwater snorkel and glass-bottom boat trail
- Dive and snorkel tours
- Themed picnic areas
- Zorb balls and zorb tours

ACTIONS

- Implement the Lake Activation Strategy with the priority being to establish marine tourism hubs at strategic locations around the lake.
- Improve the Swansea Channel so that it is safer and suitable for larger, ocean-going vessels.
- Formulate and implement a strategy to build the ocean-going sailing and cruising markets, and 'deep-sea' events (Channel dependent)
- Formulate and implement a strategy to attract high performance water sport training facilities and activities.
- Through public art, physically interpret the size of the lake, creating a new attraction and iconic photo opportunity.
- Investigate the feasibility of establishing a large marina and dry-stack facility with accommodation and other services.
- Develop and position Lake Macquarie as a destination for inclusive and adaptive sailing, paddling, water skiing and other on-water activities and events.



BELMONT WETLANDS STATE PARK AND SURROUNDS

Belmont Wetlands State Park (BWSP) is a significant coastal reserve located between Redhead and Belmont along the eastern edge of Lake Macquarie. The park covers an area of about 530 hectares and has 4.5 kilometres of beach frontage along Nine Mile Beach. It forms part of coastal wetland system linking Jewells Swamp in the north to Belmont Lagoon in the south. The park incorporates part of Nine Mile Beach (50ha), a sand-dune field (280ha) and a series of inter-linked wetlands (190ha). The sand dunes have been mined, with most of the dune field being degraded. The wetlands have high conservation and education value. The park has Aboriginal and European cultural significance, with Belmont Lagoon being part of the Aboriginal Dreamtime creation story.

Activities undertaken in the park include going to the beach, surfing, fishing, four-wheel driving, camping, walking, general exercise and cycling. The park is one of four localities within 250 kilometres of Sydney that allows four-wheel driving along the beach, and one of two localities that allows camping on the beach.

While the Plan of Management (2010) for BWSP envisaged providing a range of visitor facilities (including low impact accommodation, education

and research centre, eateries and bar, conference and function facilities and a network of shared pedestrian and cycleways and walking tracks), this has not been achieved due to lack of funds and resources. The park's facilities and infrastructure are basic, with the park performing well below its potential. A significant capital investment is required to construct roads, provide utility services and establish visitor facilities.

The interim Park Manager has identified the development priorities as:

- establishing a primitive camp ground and associated amenities
- providing toilets facilities for park users
- upgrading the existing road network
- providing power and water onsite
- providing visitor facilities and activities including picnic facilities, and interpretative walking and cycling trails
- establishing a cultural hub and kiosk as a social enterprise in collaboration with local indigenous groups
- providing spaces and facilities to host events and entertainment.

Opportunities

- To consolidate BWSP with the Crown and Council-owned land between BWSP and Redhead Beach and the Jewells Swamp area to the north, and with Belmont Lagoon and adjoining reserves in the south (as identified in Council's Local Strategic Planning Statement). This would increase the size of the park, improve the management of the wetlands, and provide additional recreation and tourism opportunities. It would also facilitate extending the coastal walk to be south from Awabakal Nature Reserve (see Section 11.3) and establishing an interpretative trail (or trails) connecting the wetlands from Jewells Swamp through to Belmont Lagoon.
- Provide a range of accommodation options. In addition to camping, BWSP could potentially support boutique accommodation such as glamping tents and eco cabins and/or lodge, possibly with views of the ocean and/or Belmont Lagoon. Over-water accommodation on Belmont Lagoon could be an option.
- Establish a caravan park/cabin complex on Council-owned land at the northern edge of the park.

- To introduce a range of commercial activities, for example, quad bike tours, four-wheel drive tours along the beach, tag-along tours combining BWSP with the Watagan Mountains, canoe/kayak/stand-up paddleboard hire on Belmont Lagoon, and bicycle hire for use in the park and on the Fernleigh Track.
- Sanctioned mountain bike trails in the Whitebridge area on the northern side of Jewells Swamp (see Section 11.6).

Actions

- Investigate the feasibility of expanding the BWSP to include Jewells Swamp and Belmont Lagoon and surrounding Council and Crown land.
- Resolve management issues.
- Update the Plan of Management, assessing opportunities for providing a range of accommodation, permitting commercial activities and developing walking, cycling and MTB trails as part of the planning process.
- Seek funding from the State Government to provide roads, infrastructure and visitor facilities.
- Investigate opportunities to establish boutique eco accommodation.

CATHERINE HILL BAY

Catherine Hill Bay is one of Lake Macquarie's special places, notably:

- the small former mining village is State Heritage listed
- the former coal loading jetty is iconic and one of the city's most photographed features
- the historic 'Catho' pub is one of the oldest pubs in the Hunter
- the beach is pristine with a great surf break
- the protected bay and shipwrecks are ideal for scuba diving
- the scenery and setting are stunning.

The beach and jetty are popular for sight-seeing, swimming, fishing, diving, snorkelling and surfing. The village is surrounded by the Lake Munmorah State Conservation Area (SCA), with the SCA adjoining Wallarah National Park to the north and part of the Lake Macquarie State Conservation Area to the west. These areas provide access to secluded beaches and are popular for bushwalking with some of the management trails attracting mountain bikers.

The character of Catherine Hill Bay is being protected through the Catherine Hill Bay Heritage Conservation Area Plan. Council is also committed to exploring barriers and opportunities to enable tourism to flourish at Catherine Hill Bay and reviewing the planning controls and framework to encourage opportunities to be realised (Council's Local Strategic Plan Action 3.13).

Opportunities

Opportunities identified by Dantia for Catherine Hill Bay include:

- retaining/rebuilding the coal jetty, with the potential for on-jetty accommodation, dining and/or viewing experiences
- boutique accommodation in the village
- dive lagoon at the southern end of the beach, capitalising on the shipwrecks in the bay and the prolific marine life surrounding the jetty.

If feasible, repurposing the coal jetty would be a catalytic project for Lake Macquarie.

Other opportunities include:

- An underwater attraction: As the area at the southern end of the bay is relatively shallow, there may be potential to establish an underwater sculpture park, either as stand-alone sculptures or using the jetty footings and substructure as a 'canvas'. If the jetty is to be demolished and not replaced, there may be potential to leave the footings and other materials to create a dive reef and trail.
- Being surrounded by the Munmorah SCA, part of the Lake Macquarie SCA and the Wallarah National Park, there is opportunity to connect these areas with walking and possibly MTB trails – a coast to

lake trail as well as coastal trails, and also link them to the trails being established by Council in the Catherine Hill Bay area; with trail head facilities (parking, information and interpretation) provided in Catherine Hill Bay.

Actions

- Assess the feasibility of retaining and re-using the iconic jetty for tourism and recreation.
- Investigate opportunities for boutique accommodation.
- Investigate the feasibility of establishing an underwater sculpture park and/or utilising the jetty footings and other jetty materials to create a dive reef and trail.
- Work with NPWS to investigate options for interconnected walking and possibly mountain biking trails, including a Bay to Lake Walk and a coastal walk, with the walks supported by trail head facilities in Catherine Hill Bay.

LAKE MACQUARIE AIRPORT

Lake Macquarie Airport is the hub for the city's aerial adventures. The airport is home to five aviation tourism operators:

- Airborne Flight Training: microlight and gyroplane flights and lessons
- Matt Hall Racing: aerobatic thrill flights, scenic flights, charter flights
- Skydive Australia: Newcastle's closest beach skydiving
- Skyline Aviation: Scenic helicopter flights, charter flights, helicopter flight training
- Lake Macquarie Aviation Charger: charter flights.

The Westpac Life Saver Rescue Helicopter service operates from a base at the airport, with the airport also used on an occasional basis for emergency services and charity flights. The airport has also been used as the staging area for air events and is seeking to host the World Air Race Championship.

The airport is privately owned. A conceptual master plan has been prepared for the airport precinct, with plans for an expanded tourism and emergency services hub. The master plan includes an aviation-themed cafe-restaurant, additional hangar space, improved access to the Westpac Helicopter Base and improvements to the air-side infrastructure. Improving the airside infrastructure would enable the airport to accommodate more aviation tourism activities including recreational and aeroclub fly-ins.

In Lake Macquarie Local Strategic Plan (Action 3.16), Council is seeking to "work with stakeholders to investigate further use and expansion of Lake Macquarie Airport, including co-location of associated aviation operations and tourism industries".

Challenges

Realising the potential of the airport will require:

- stabilising the western end of the airport which is subject to erosion from currents in the Swansea Channel.
- meeting planning requirements relating to bushfire asset protection zones and raising building sites and the hardstand area above the one in 100-year flood line.
- land swap or acquisition of land to consolidate land along the eastern and possibly western edge of the airport.

Grant funding is likely to be required to offset the costs of the civil and building works.

Opportunities

Resolving issues and implementing the airport master plan will enable:

- growth in existing airport businesses and aviation tourism
- attraction of complementary businesses
- more and larger events to be staged
- attraction of the recreational and aero-club fly ins
- the airport to offer a themed dining experience.

With additional land, there may also be opportunity to offer other adventure-based activities, such as indoor skydiving (iFly) or a flight simulator experience, which are not weather-dependent to operate.

Actions

- Support the airport owners in resolving issues and securing grant funding to upgrade the airport infrastructure and visitor facilities.
- Investigate the feasibility of establishing an indoor aviation attraction at the airport.
- Work towards hosting aviation events in Lake Macquarie, including an annual high-profile event.

LAKE ARTS PRECINCT

Council has been progressively developing the Booragul Foreshore and Speers Point as art, dining and recreation precincts. Attractions and facilities include the Museum of Arts and Culture yapang, Sculpture Park and Awaba Historic House at Booragul and the Multi-Arts Pavilion mima, Variety Playground, heritage shed, outdoor stage and picnic areas at Speers Point. Speers Point has a monthly farmers market and the fortnightly homegrown market with both precincts hosting a range of creative and performing arts events and activities. The areas are located on the Booragul to Belmont shared pathway, are part of the Creative LAKE Sculpture Trail and are also destinations on the lake explorer route

Just west of these two precincts is Teralba, a historic mining village dating from the 1880s with a historic hotel, cafes and several arts and 'collectables' businesses. Both Teralba and Booragul have rail access.

Challenges

- Three cultural/heritage localities separated by urban development, with Five Islands Road being a significant barrier between the lake foreshore and Teralba.
- Increasing the appeal of the shared pathway between Booragul and Speers Point and developing attractive links between these precincts and Teralba village and Teralba and Booragul railway stations.

- The presentation of Teralba is not of the same calibre as the Booragul and Speers Point.
- Breaking down the 'perception barriers' around the arts; with the focus being on providing enriching experiences for all.

Opportunities

- Leveraging the opportunities provided by rail and ferry access to the area.
- Enhancing the appeal of Teralba through streetscaping, with the village green (corner of York and Anzac Streets) providing the opportunity for a showcase garden and art installations.
- Leveraging Awaba House – capitalising on its reopening to build awareness and utilising the venue for a range of functions and events.
- To raise awareness and build a brand for the precinct through increased wayfinding and interpretative signage, information and online presence.
- Hold more frequent social engagement events within the precinct.
- Tailor events and arts to a multi-generational audience.
- Additional art installations such as in-water art installations in Cockle Bay, visible from Speers Point and Booragul and forming part of the Cockle Creek kayaking route; nature-inspired installations on the Cockle Creek delta islands.

Actions

- Formulate and implement a vision and master plan for the precinct, leveraging rail and ferry access.
- Formulate and implement a streetscape plan and activation strategy for Teralba.
- Leverage the reopening of Awaba House to raise awareness of the precinct and build the functions, events and dining markets.
- With the reopening of Awaba House and the inclusion of Teralba, review and refresh the brand and brand-promise of the precinct, with a focus on enriching arts, cultural, heritage and dining experiences against the stunning backdrop of the lake.
- Increase activation through additional events, venue programming and temporary and permanent art and/or lighting installations, including on-water activities and possibly utilising the Cockle Creek delta islands.
- Partner with local businesses to introduce more activities and experiences within the precinct.
- Monitor initiatives in thriving arts destinations nationally and internationally, and collect data and feedback from arts audiences and Lake Arts Precinct visitors to assist with activation, programming and marketing.

RATHMINES

Rathmines is a State Heritage listed site on the western shore of Lake Macquarie. The 50-hectare reserve has frontage to Kilaben and Catalina Bays. Located between Toronto and Morisset, the reserve is readily accessible from the M1 Motorway, and well positioned to become a major lakeside attraction, particularly for visitors staying on the western side of the lake.

Rathmines has a rich cultural history. It is part of the lands of the Awabakal people. From 1939-1961 it housed RAAF Base Rathmines, the largest flying boat base in the Southern Hemisphere. The flying boats based at Rathmines played an active role in WWII and subsequent actions in the Pacific Region.

Rathmines has been identified in Council's Local Strategic Planning Statement, Lake Activation Strategy, Events and Festivals Strategy and former Destination Management Plans as a significant precinct, with the precinct having strong environmental, heritage, cultural, recreational and tourism assets. The Lake Activation Strategy identified Rathmines as a 'Level 3 Activation Precinct', with the potential to support tourist accommodation, lakeside dining, a broad range of foreshore and on-water activities and major events.

There are two accommodation properties within the precinct – the Catalina Lakefront Retreat, which provides fully accessible accommodation (28 rooms – 104 beds) with property designed

for groups and people with disabilities, and the Christadelphian Bible School which runs study/holiday camps for Christadelphians from across Australia and internationally. Other attractions and visitor facilities in the precinct include the Catalina Bowling Club, Rathmines Theatre and Heritage Centre, Westlakes Music Hall, picnic facilities and playgrounds, walking trails, a disc golf course, jetties and boat ramps, and the seaplane landing ramp and hardstand. Events held at Rathmines include the Catalina Festival, Blast from the Past and the Classic Boat Fest. The disc golf course has hosted National and State Championships. The Rathmines Catalina Association runs heritage tours of the site for coach tour and other groups, with the tours packaged with meals at the bowling club.

Opportunities

The Plan of Management and Master Plan for the precinct identify opportunities for:

- providing interpretative walks and interpretation of Awabakal heritage, the physical environment, the former RAAF base and the role of the Catalina Flying Boats in theatres of war
- improving recreation, marine and visitor facilities, including upgrading the swimming pool and re-purposing the former Bomb and Fuel Wharf as a fishing jetty for people with disabilities

- upgrading the presentation of the bowling club (removing unsympathetic additions and reinstating the original Officers Mess) and Music Hall and providing an outdoor entertainment area adjacent to the Music Hall
- providing an RV camping area
- activating the precinct through events.

The Lake Activation Strategy identified opportunities for:

- quality interpretation, noting that the former RAAF base would be of great of interest to both the ‘grey nomad’ and international tourist groups/markets (particularly USA visitors)
- reactivating the landing strip for use by seaplanes; the hardstand and flying boat ramp at Rathmines still allows for planes to land on the lake and taxi onto dry land, which is a rare opportunity in NSW; the strategy recommends approaching seaplane companies to fly from Sydney, Newcastle, Port Stephens or other localities, with Rathmines positioned as a centrepiece for storytelling, including a tour of the base plus a lake cruise
- boutique accommodation, with the Christadelphian Bible College identified as a possible location
- lakeside dining
- events.

Other opportunities include:

- incorporating accessible activities and facilities within the precinct to support the Catalina Lakefront Retreat and position Lake Macquarie as an accessible destination, including through:
 - ‘all-ability accessible canoe/kayak platform, possibly as part of the restoration and adaptive reuse of the Bomb and Fuel Wharf as an accessible fishing jetty
 - a loop within the proposed pump track suitable for handcycles and adaptive mountain bikes
 - an accessible bushwalk
 - upgrading the swimming enclosure and providing an access ramp as well as access to a Mobi-chair
- using technology (e.g. sound trail app, virtual reality) as part of the interpretation of the precinct
- bicycle and water sports equipment hire available within the precinct
- shared pathway/cycleway link to Toronto, to link with the rail trail to Fassifern Station.

Actions

- Progressively implement the Rathmines Master Plan.
- Investigate options for utilising technology in interpreting the precinct.
- Explore opportunities to encourage seaplane companies to operate flights to Rathmines.
- Continue to incorporate accessible activities and facilities within the precinct, including an accessible fishing platform and an ‘all-ability’ canoe and kayak platform.
- Encourage appropriate commercial operations within the precinct (e.g. lakeside dining, boutique accommodation, pop-up cafe, bicycle and water sports equipment hire).
- Promote disc golf as part of the activity base of the city and assist the disc golf club to attract and host tournaments.

WANGI WANGI - AWABA CONSERVATION AREA

The corridor from Wangi Wangi Point through to the M1 Motorway has the potential to become a major tourism and recreation precinct. The corridor incorporates Wangi Wangi, the historic Wangi Power Station and the proposed Awaba Conservation Area. It also adjoins the Eraring Power Station, which is being decommissioned (planned for 2025). This could open up opportunities for the site and surrounding area.

Wangi Wangi is a holiday destination with visitors attracted by the Wangi Point Holiday Park, access to the lake, several lakeside beaches, the Wangi Point precinct of the Lake Macquarie State Conservation area and the National Heritage Listed Dobell House. The area has a small cafe and dining precinct.

The historic Wangi Power Station, on the western edge of the suburb, is an iconic building and significant landmark.

Abutting the Wangi Power Station is the proposed Awaba Conservation Area, identified in Council’s Local Strategic Planning Statement. The proposed area is a bushland corridor extending from the western edge of the Wangi Peninsula through to the M1 Motorway. This area is readily accessible from the M1 Motorway, the growth areas in Cessnock and Maitland cities and by rail (Awaba Station).





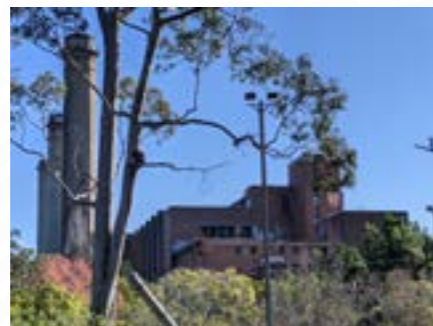
Opportunities

Wangi Wangi

- Upgrade the Wangi Point Holiday Park and adjoining lakeside reserve.

Wangi Power Station

- The site has the potential to become a major lifestyle and tourism precinct, with tourism attractions and facilities including accommodation, museum/interpretation, galleries, art installations, entertainment and events, tavern/boutique beverage producer, lifestyle shopping and activities, conference, meeting and function facilities.



Awaba Conservation Area

- Provide a network of walking, cycling, gravel grinding, mountain bike and possibly horse-riding trails, including trails that link the Lake foreshore through to the Watagan Mountains, the Awaba MTB Park and Awaba Railway Station.
- Lakeside and/or bushland accommodation (e.g. eco lodge or cabins, glamping, camping).
- Incorporating interpretation of the Wangi and

nearby Eraring Power Stations as part of the 'story' of the area.

- To utilise part of the site for the conservation of rare and endangered species. NPWS and other organisations are establishing feral animal-free parks to breed and re-introduce native mammals, with these areas having visitor facilities and running visitor programs (e.g. nocturnal tours). Examples include Shanes Park Sydney, Australian Wildlife Conservancy Reserves and Aussie Ark in the Barrington Ranges.

Actions

- Progressively upgrade the Wangi Point Holiday Park.
- Ensure that the Wangi Power Station is retained and advocate for tourist accommodation, conference and function rooms and visitor attractions and facilities to be included in the adaptive re-use of the Wangi Power Station building and site.
- Advocate for the establishment and development of the proposed Awaba Conservation Area.
- Approach NPWS and other wildlife conservation organisations to explore opportunities to establish a wildlife conservation project within the Awaba Conservation Area.

STRATEGY PRIORITY 2:

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



Since 2017, 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.

Opportunities to further enhance some of the city's outdoor attractions, value-add and package and/or to grow both activity-based and event visitation are discussed in the following sections. Growth needs to occur with a framework that protects assets and minimizes conflict between user groups and between residents and visitors.



NATIONAL PARKS

Lake Macquarie has two National Parks, four Nature Reserves, and five State Conservation Areas (SCAs), with these areas dispersed along the coast, around the Lake and in the Watagan Mountains.

TYPE	COAST	LAKE AND SURROUNDS	HINTERLAND
Nature Reserves	Awabakal Moon Island	Pulbah Island Tingira Heights	
National Parks	Wollarah		Watagans
State Conservation Areas	Glenrock (part) Munmorah (part)	Lake Macquarie (part)	Mount Sugarloaf Jilliby (part)

In addition to their essential role in preserving biodiversity and protecting flora and fauna, these areas are an intrinsic part of the city's setting and are significant recreational and tourism assets. The parks are drivers of visitation (e.g. Glenrock SCA attracts over a million visitors a year) and support a diversity of commercial and non-commercial activities (including bushwalking and hiking, tours, mountain biking, bird watching, swimming, fishing, horse riding, rock sports, wind sports, picnicking, camping and education) and events. Information on visitor facilities available and activities undertaken in each of the areas is provided in Section 4 of the Resource Document.

Activities that can be undertaken are determined by the classification of the park. Nature Reserves are primarily for conservation with no or minimal visitor facilities and only low-key activities such as bushwalking permitted. National Parks and State Conservation Areas provide greater opportunities

for activities and visitation. Activities permitted and the facilities provided in each park are identified in a Plan of Management. Where Plans of Management have not been prepared, a Statement of Management Intent provides the management framework. Through its licensing framework, NPWS provides opportunities for in-park commercial tours and activities and events.

The Watagans National Park and Glenrock SCA are well established parks that attract very high levels of visitation. NPWS is currently upgrading visitor facilities and trails in these parks and is preparing a new Plan of Management for Glenrock SCA. Both these areas, plus the Lake Macquarie SCA are facing increasing pressure from population growth in Lake Macquarie and the surrounding region. While track upgrading has occurred on Wangi Wangi Point in the Lake Macquarie SCA, there is a need for a major investment in upgrading walking trails, visitor facilities and signage in other parts of this SCA.

Visitor facilities in the Wallarah National Park are limited, with a Plan of Management still to be prepared. Munmorah SCA was expanded in 2011 to include land surrounding Catherine Hill Bay, with the northern part of Munmorah SCA now abutting Wallarah National Park. At present, access to these areas is not well defined and there are no trail head facilities at Caves Beach or Catherine Hill Bay. Council's Strategic Planning Statement identifies the Swansea – Caves Beach area as an 'urban intensification area' with an increase in building density as well as new residential subdivisions within the Catherine Hill Bay area. This will increase local

use of both Wallarah National Park and the northern end of Munmorah SCA, increasing the pressure on these parks.

Opportunities

- A coordinated approach between Council and NPWS to the development of the Wallarah National Park and northern end of the Munmorah SCA, improving access, providing visitor facilities and linking walking and cycling trails, both within the parks and with the trails that Council is developing in Catherine Hill Bay.
- Developing signature trails – extending the Coastal Walk (see Section 11.3) and developing a signature Coast to Lake Walk, linking Wallarah National Park and Munmorah SCA with the Chain Valley precinct of the Lake Macquarie SCA.
- Extending the Newcastle Geotrail south (or developing a new Lake Macquarie coastal Geotrail) to include Wallarah National Park and Munmorah SCA.
- 'On Country' experiences delivered by local Aboriginal people. This could be ideal for Pulbah Island.
- To enhance the visitor experience by improving access and trail head facilities, particularly for the coastal parks and SCAs.
- Additional commercial activities in the parks with these packaged with accommodation (e.g. proposed Cooranbong Eco Retreat).

- Epic cross-country mountain bike trail passing through Sugarloaf SCA, Watagans National Park and Jilliby SCA (see Section 11.6).
- Continued use of the parks for low impact events, e.g. trail running.

Challenges

- NPWS have limited funds and resources, with the priority being conservation and management.
- Managing the increasing pressure on the parks from population growth in Lake Macquarie and the surrounding region and increasing visitation. The coastal and lakeside parks that abut residential areas are part of the local recreation and fitness 'infrastructure' and attract high levels of use.
- Plans of Management are not in place for all parks and SCA's within Lake Macquarie and some of the plans that are in place are dated. This limits what can be undertaken and impacts on the capacity of NPWS to respond to changing demand.
- Aging and/or limited infrastructure in some of the parks.
- Managing the urban – park interface. In particular, some of the park access points/track heads do not have parking areas, with park users competing with local residents for limited on-street parking.
- Dated and/or limited directional, wayfinding and interpretative signage in some of the parks. Limited directional (or TASAC attraction) signage to the park access points from main roads is also an issue.

- Managing illegal and non-permitted activities including 4WD, trail bikes, mountain bikes (in non-approved areas) and rubbish dumping that impact negatively on the environment, increase management costs and can create conflict between different users.

Actions

- Seek to work with NPWS to adopt an integrated approach to address urban-park interface issues and to plan for and develop track head facilities including off-street parking areas.
- Endeavour to adopt an integrated approach to the development of walking, cycling and MTB tracks, visitor facilities and direction and interpretative signage in the Caves Beach – Wallarah National Park – Munmorah SCA (northern section) – Catherine Hill Bay corridor.
- Advocate for improvements to visitor facilities, walking and cycling trails and signage within National Parks and SCA's within the city.
- Ensure that Council provides input into the preparation of Plans of Management and reviews draft plans when on exhibition.
- Work with the Hunter MTB Club, NPWS and Forestry Corporation to investigate the potential for an Epic cross-country MTB trail to run the length of the Watagan Ranges.



STATE FORESTS

Three State Forests, (Onley, Heaton and Awaba) are located in the Watagan Ranges along the western edge of Lake Macquarie. Heaton and Awaba State Forests link Sugarloaf SCA and the Watagans National Park, with Onley State Forest contiguous with the Watagans National Park and Jillaby SCA.

The State Forests are very popular with visitors, with most visitors coming from the Hunter, Central Coast and Sydney Regions. Visitor facilities include camping areas, day use picnic areas, lookouts, walking trails and forest roads. The Awaba Mountain Bike Park is located within the Awaba State Forest. The Great North Walk passes through each of the Forests. Activities undertaken in the forests include camping, bushwalking, mountain biking, bird-watching, scenic driving, four-wheel driving, trail bike riding and horse riding.

The State Forests are also used for a range of events including mountain biking, gravel grinding, 4WD club activities, orienteering, trail running and horse events (e.g. endurance rides).

Opportunities

- Epic cross-country mountain bike trail passing through the State Forests (see Section 11.6).
- Further development of the Awaba MTB Park including expansion of MTB trails (see Section 11.6).
- Encouraging further commercial activities within the State Forests.
- Encouraging the use of the State Forests for suitable events.
- An off-road Park to help reduce illegal 4WD and trail bike activities in the State Forests and National Parks. This may be provided by the proposed Black Rock Motor Park or could be developed on former mining lands.

Challenges

- Forestry Corporation of NSW have limited funds and resources for visitor facilities and managing visitation, with the corporation's priority being commercial forestry.
- Managing the increasing pressure on the forests from population growth in Lake Macquarie and the surrounding region and increasing visitation to the Lower Hunter Region.
- The Watagan Forests are one of the most accessible and higher profile areas for 4WD and trail bikes. The closure of some 4WD areas close to Sydney and increased policing of other areas is resulting in more 4WD and trail bike activity in the Watagans. While many 4WD and trail bikers are responsible there is an element that are coming to the area to 'test' their vehicles and skills and 'party' resulting in significant environmental damage, anti-social behaviour and conflict with other users, with this potentially damaging the reputation of the area. Neither Forestry nor Police have the resources to patrol the area to the level needed.
- Aging facilities and infrastructure, with increased use accelerating the demise of trails and facilities.
- Limited directional signage to and within the State Forests.
- Limited mobile phone coverage in the Watagan Ranges, with this limiting the ability to report illegal and anti-social behaviour.

Actions

- Advocate for additional resources to manage and police State Forests within Lake Macquarie.
- Improve directional signage to the State Forests.
- Work with the Hunter MTB Club, NPWS and Forestry Corporation to investigate the potential for an Epic cross-country MTB trail to run the length of the Watagan Ranges.
- If Black Rock Motor Park does not proceed, explore other options to establish an off-road 4WD and trail bike park, possibly utilising areas degraded by coal mining.



WALKING AND BUSHWALKING

Lake Macquarie offers a variety of walking experiences, from the Red Bluff board walk over the lake through to rugged trails in the Watagan Ranges. The Great North Walk, from Newcastle to Sydney, traverses the City. Council has produced a Walking Trails Guide that features 20 walking trails of varying length and degrees of difficulty. The access points for some of the walks can be difficult for visitors to find, with many of the access points not having a map and/or information about the walk.

Opportunities

- Coastal walk linking with Bathers Way in the north and extending south from Glenrock SCA to Munmorah SCA. A coastal walk, linking Newcastle to the Central Coast via the Lake Macquarie coastline, has been mooted since the 1990s. Bathers Way coastal walk is in place in Newcastle, with this walk incorporating the Newcastle Geotrail which features 14 interpretative sites explaining the geology, landforms and mining history of the Newcastle coastline. To the south, Central Coast Council is developing a coastal walk.

Within Lake Macquarie, the route for the coastal walk is yet to be determined. There are some coastal walking routes within the Glenrock SCA, Awabakal Nature Reserve, Wallarah SCA and Munmorah SCA, that could be readily linked by using existing trails (e.g. Fernleigh Track) and coastal reserves. The geology and mining history along the Lake Macquarie coastline lends itself to a geotrail overlay.

- Wetlands Walk – an interpretative trail linking the wetland corridor from Jewells Swamp south to and around Belmont Lagoon.
- Coast to Lake walk – a signature bushwalk linking Catherine Hill Bay to Lake Macquarie.

Challenges

- Sourcing funds to develop and maintain walking trails and trail infrastructure, including signs.
- Land tenure issues, particularly for longer walks.

Actions

- Progress the planning of the Coastal Walk, taking the project to 'shovel-ready' status to enable grant funding to be sourced. As part of this process, evaluate the potential for a geotrail.
- Investigate the feasibility of establishing a Coast to Lake walk from Catherine Hill Bay through to Lake Macquarie.
- Improve directional and track head signage for the walks featured in the Walking Trail Guides.

SAILING

Lake Macquarie is widely recognised as one of the best recreational and competitive sailing waterways in Australia for small to medium size vessels¹⁸. The lake has a long fetch and exposure to strong and consistent winds, with the bays and inlets providing opportunities for different courses. The lake regularly hosts national and state sailing and wind-surfing events and has hosted international events. The city has produced world-class sailors including Olympians. Council is exploring options to establish a 'Sailing School of Excellence'.

Assets to work with

- Physical characteristics of the lake which are ideal for sailing and other wind sports such as wind surfing, kite surfing and wind foiling.
- Reputation as a sailing destination.
- Eight amateur sailing clubs¹⁹, most of which hold events and offer 'learn to sail' programs. The sailing clubs each have waterfront boat sheds.
- Point Wolstoncroft Sport and Recreation Centre (Central Coast LGA) – a popular venue for State Youth sailing events.
- Proposed Morisset Sport and Recreation Centre – accommodation for sailing events and activities.
- Diversity of sailing courses suitable for different categories of vessels.

¹⁸ Lake Macquarie City Council (2021) Draft Lake Activation Strategy

¹⁹ Seven of the amateur sailing clubs are located in Lake Macquarie, with one at Manning Point on the southern edge of the lake in the Central Coast LGA.



- Three commercial yacht clubs providing licensed club facilities, berths and moorings, and lakeside dining.
- Specialist sailing programs, including 'Sailability' for people with disabilities, and 'She Sails' to encourage female participation in the sport.
- Commercial sailing operations – Discover Sailing School, Lake Macquarie Yacht Charter, Lake Macquarie Sailing Charters.
- Commercial wind sports operator – Kite and foil hire and tuition.
- Marina facilities.
- Lake Macquarie Radio Yacht Club (sailing at a micro-level).
- Multitude of boat ramps and foreshore reserves providing access for trailable boats and wind sports.
- Proven experience in hosting a broad range of sailing and wind sports events.
- Accommodation and other infrastructure in-place to support events. This includes accommodation suitable for disabled athletes.

Opportunities

- Position Lake Macquarie as the 'sailing capital' of Australia.
- Establish a 'Sailing School of Excellence'. As part of this, advocate for the Hunter Academy of Sport to introduce sailing development and high-performance sailing programs, and for the NSW Institute of Sport to run talent identification and training programs on Lake Macquarie.

- Become a specialist centre for foil training and events. iQFoil (Wind foiling) and Kite Foil Racing have been introduced for the 2024 Olympics and Sailing Australia has introduced Kite Foil Racing and Windfoiling Pathway Programs.
- Work with the amateur sailing clubs to promote their 'try sailing', 'learn to sail' and other programs to residents in the surrounding region and to visitors.
- Sailing events – develop a 'Sail Lake Macquarie' festival/regatta and work with and assist the Sailing and Wind Sports Clubs and Associations, to bid for and host State, National and possibly international regattas.
- Position and promote Lake Macquarie as a centre for inclusive/adaptive sailing and wind sports and explore opportunities to develop inclusive/adaptive programs and events.
- If Swansea Channel is improved, grow the touring/cruising yacht market and explore options for ocean-going sailing events.

Challenges

- Amateur sailing clubs are volunteer-based, which limits their capacity to attract and host events.
- Most of the sailing clubs are located on Crown Reserves, with lease/licence conditions limiting the ability to utilise facilities for non-sailing activities (e.g. cafe, functions).
- Swansea Channel is unsafe for larger/deeper keel vessels – limits opportunities for attracting cruising yachts and ocean-going sailing events.

Actions

- Position Lake Macquarie as the 'sailing capital' of Australia.
- Work with sailing clubs to identify opportunities to use their club houses for additional activities (e.g. dining, functions, equipment hire) and navigate the planning approval process.
- Establish the Lake Macquarie 'Sailing School of Excellence'.
- Advocate for the Hunter Academy of Sport to introduce a sailing program based at Lake Macquarie and for the NSW Institute of Sport to run sailing programs in Lake Macquarie.
- Investigate opportunities to become a specialist centre for wind and kite foil training and events.
- Investigate opportunities to become a centre for adaptive/inclusive sailing and wind sport activities and events.
- Promote 'Learn to Sail' and other programs suitable for visitors through the Visit Lake Macquarie website and visitor guide.
- Introduce a Sail Lake Macquarie festival/regatta.
- Work with the sailing clubs to develop and promote an annual sailing events calendar.
- Assist the sailing clubs and wind sports associations to attract and host State, National and potentially international events.
- Advocate for significant improvements to the Swansea Channel and if successful, build the touring yacht market and introduce/attract ocean-going sailing events.

CYCLING

Cycle tourism is a strong and high growth, high yield niche market. In 2019 it was the fifth most popular participation sport in Australia and also one of the fastest growing sports²⁰. The introduction of electric bikes is contributing to market growth with more people able to cycle. Broadly, the cycle market incorporates:

- cycling enthusiasts who are motivated to travel to destinations primarily or solely because of the routes, trails and the riding experiences available
- event attendees – cyclists who travel to participate in or watch community and competitive cycling events
- cycling tours – independent, supported, and escorted
- recreational cyclists – visitors who will ride while visiting a destination, with cycling not the primary reason for their visit.

Cycling can be divided into road cycling (sealed road), gravel grinding (also called adventure riding incorporating a mix of sealed and gravel roads, fire trails and MTB tracks) and mountain biking. Gravel grinding is relatively new, and currently the fastest growing cycling sector. Mountain biking is discussed in Section 11.6.

Lake Macquarie has a network of cycleways, including the high-profile Fernleigh Track rail trail and the Northern Bays Way (includes Red Bluff

Boardwalk). The city mainly draws cycling enthusiasts from surrounding LGAs, with cyclists riding through the city primarily for exercise and recreation. Visitors to Lake Macquarie, particularly families and caravanners/RVers, are increasingly travelling with bicycles and are looking for safe and attractive places to ride. Fernleigh Track is popular with this market. Visitors will also hire bicycles. The 'Loop the Lake' Charity Ride is a popular, well-known event.

There are several cycle tour companies that offer self-guided and supported cycle tours of the Central Coast and Hunter Wine Country areas with Connect Sports' six-day Hunter itinerary including one day in Lake Macquarie.

Lake Macquarie City Council is expanding its cycleway network, with a focus on linking routes and improving access to key localities. Council is also supporting the development of the Richmond Vale Rail Trail linking Newcastle and Kurri Kurri through the north western corner of the city, with plans to link the Rail Trail to Speers Point via the Tramway Track and to the Fernleigh Track via Charlestown.

²⁰ SportAus (2019) AusPlay Participation Survey Top 20 participation sports and physical activities – Australia 2019

Of the future cycle routes identified in Council's Walking, Cycling and Better Streets Strategy, the routes that have significant tourism potential are:

- coastal cycleway, incorporating the extension of the Fernleigh Track to Swansea (currently under construction), with links south to Caves Beach, Catherine Hill Bay, Nords Wharf and to the Central Coast. To encourage visitor use, safe links are also needed to Belmont, Swansea and Blacksmiths Holiday Parks, Caves Beach Hotel and Rafferty's Resort.
- Belmont to Toronto (Northern Bays Way), through to Wangi Wangi and Morisset. From a tourism perspective, the priority missing link sections are the connections between the Fernleigh Track and Toronto, and the section from Toronto to Rathmines.
- Morisset to Cooranbong, with a MTB link to the Awaba MTB Park.

If the historic Wangi Power Station redevelopment includes tourism uses and/or the proposed Awaba Conservation Area is developed, then the proposed links between Toronto and Morisset via Wangi Wangi and the Awaba Station to Wangi Wangi route would also prove popular with visitors.

Assets to work with

- Iconic cycleways – Fernleigh Track and the Northern Bays Way.
- Proposal to establish cycleways in the Belmont Wetlands State Park with these linking to the Fernleigh Track.

- Existing and potential rail trails.
- Attractive setting to ride.
- Relatively flat topography, particularly along the coastline and around the lake which is ideal for families and recreational cyclists.
- Bicycle hire available in the city.
- Rail access with the Fassifern Rail Trail linking Toronto and Fassifern Station.
- Large cycling populations in the Lower Hunter and Central Coast areas, as well as ready access to Sydney markets.
- Established, popular event in Loop the Lake.
- Cycle tour companies operating in the region.
- Ferry service linking shared pathways at key locations around the lake.

Opportunities

- Cycling event to 'launch' the extension of the Fernleigh Track and raise the profile of the route.
- Promote the hop-on/hop-off ferry as a link between the Fernleigh Track and the Northern Bays Way, providing a great day out.
- Bike share
- Cycle tours.
- Cycling events.
- 'Ride the Rail Trails' promotion once Richmond Vale Rail Trail comes on-line.

Actions

- Progressively implement Council's Walking, Cycling and Better Streets Strategy, taking into consideration tourism opportunities when planning and developing new cycleways and shared pathways.
- Ensure that the city's cycleways are mapped on key bicycle websites and the information and images remain current.
- Approach cycle tour operators to include Lake Macquarie as part of their tour programs.
- Promote the hop-on/hop-off ferry service for transferring bikes between the eastern and western side of the lake.,
- Assess the feasibility of establishing a bike share operation within the city with bikes available at the ferry wharves, railway stations and other strategic locations.
- Work with Central Coast Council to complete the Coastal Cycleway.

MOUNTAIN BIKING

Lake Macquarie is recognised as mountain biking (MTB) destination. Mountain biking is a high-yield growth sport with MTB enthusiasts having a high propensity to travel nationally and globally to ride iconic MTB destinations and trails and compete in MTB events.

Lake Macquarie has two sanctioned (approved) mountain bike areas, the Awaba Mountain Bike Park and Glenrock State Conservation Area. Mountain biking is also permitted on fire trails in the National Parks and State Conservation Areas and within State Forests. In addition, Lake Macquarie has an extensive network of non-sanctioned trails on Crown and Council reserves, in National Parks and SCAs and on private land. The most popular non-sanctioned riding areas are the trails adjoining Glenrock SCA, Whitebridge, Teralba and Holmesville. The extent of the trail network is shown on Figure 11.1.

As a 'rule of thumb' a locality needs about 85 kilometres of quality single trail across a diversity of terrains for an overnight (two days riding) stay. Awaba MTB Park currently offers about 30 kilometres of trails and Glenrock SCA about 15 kilometres of approved trails plus a network of non-approved trails.

Awaba MTB Park is located in the Awaba State Forest. It was developed and is managed by the Hunter Mountain Bike Association (HMBA) under a permit from the Forestry Corporation of NSW. The Awaba MTB Park offers a mix of cross country and downhill trails plus a flow trail and a development trail, with some of the trails considered to be world-class. Some of the trails are suitable for adaptive

mountain-biking. Several commercial operators provide shuttle services within the park. The park has hosted a range of National, State and Club MTB events as well as commercially organised MTB and gravel grinding events, with the larger events attracting up to 550 competitors. Hunter Mountain Bike Association (HMBA) is looking to attract international events such as the Oceania Championships. The proposed accommodation properties in the western and north-western areas of Lake Macquarie will potentially benefit from major MTB events.

Glenrock SCA is very popular for mountain biking, offering a coastal setting, good trails and ready access from the Fernleigh Track. The SCA is a relatively small park that attracts more than a million visitors a year, with the park being under pressure from different user groups. There is no capacity to expand the MTB trail network on-site. Mountain bikers often combine Glenrock with unsanctioned trails in the surrounding area, in particular the trails in the Whitebridge area which can also be accessed from the Fernleigh Track. Most of the trails in the Whitebridge area are on Crown land, and there may be opportunity to develop this area for mountain biking.

In the north-west of the city, there is an extensive network of tracks in the Holmesville and Killingworth area, with both areas popular for mountain biking. Many of the trails at Holmesville were developed by the HMBA. The trails at Teralba are also very popular.



Figure 11.1 Popular MTB Localities within Lake Macquarie



The Teralba trails are close to the proposed Black Rock Motor Sports Park and there could be potential for mountain bikers to stay in the accommodation at BlackRock or at the proposed Cooranbong Eco Retreat and ride Awaba, Teralba and possibly Holmesville.

Action 5.11 of Council's Local Strategic Plan is to prepare a trail strategy, incorporating walking and mountain bike trails in the city, to provide connection with the existing and planned pathway and cycling networks.

Assets to work with

- Awaba MTB Park and Glenrock SCA, two well-known, sanctioned MTB areas offering quality trails and very different settings and experiences. Due to its size, terrain, elevation and setting, Awaba has the potential to become one of Australia's premier mountain-biking destinations.
- Three high-profile MTB areas in the Lower Hunter, Awaba, Glenrock and Dungog. Combined, these areas offer four and/or five days riding.
- Awaba and Dungog are some of the few MTB Parks in Australia that cater for adaptive mountain-biking. A disability service provider is already bringing small groups to Awaba. There is also potential for adaptive cyclists to stay at the Catalina Lake Front Retreat at Rathmines.

- Sanctioned riding trails in several National Parks and State Conservation Areas and the ability to ride in State Forests.
- Extensive network of unsanctioned riding trails, in a range of different environments. There may be potential to formalise several of these riding areas to provide additional sanctioned areas.
- Reasonable network of connecting cycleways, with Fernleigh Track being a popular access route for Glenrock SCA and the unsanctioned trails in the north-east of the city.
- Established, high profile MTB events, with the potential to grow existing events and attract additional events.
- Small number of commercial businesses offering shuttle and other services.
- Ready access to the Greater Sydney, Central Coast and Hunter Regions.
- Rail access along the western side of the city, with the potential to extend the proposed Morisset to Cooranbong cycleway to Awaba MTB Park, and possibly to link the Holmesville and/or Teralba areas to local stations. To the north, Dungog is seeing an increase in the number of mountain-bikers arriving by train, and there is potential for this to occur in Lake Macquarie, particularly if there are trails linking the riding areas to stations and accommodation.

- Air access via Newcastle Airport for interstate and potentially, international mountain bikers.
- New accommodation proposed for the western side of the city – Cooranbong Eco Retreat, Black Rock Motor Park, Trinity Point, Sport and Recreation Centre at Morisset and upgraded facilities at Morisset Showground, with this complementing camping opportunities in the State Forests and Watagans National Park surrounding Awaba MTB Park.

Opportunities

Mountain biking is consistent with Lake Macquarie's branding and positioning. It also attracts the city's key target markets – the under 45 years adventure seekers, families and active older (45-65) visitors.

- Looking at the big 'picture' the Hunter Region has three high-profile mountain biking destinations, Awaba, Glenrock SCA and Dungog, which offer very different experiences. Dungog is looking to significantly expand its MTB offering. Combined, these three localities offer currently offer about five days riding with the potential to significantly increase this. With access through Newcastle

Airport, there is opportunity to work with NPWS, Forestry Corporation, the HMBA and Ride Dungog, MTB tour operators, shuttle operators and accommodation providers to position, package and promote the Lower Hunter region as an MTB destination which caters for both mainstream and adaptive mountain bikers.

- To develop Awaba into one of Australia's premier mountain-biking destinations. HMBA's plans for the park include:
 - extending the trail network to provide 80-100 kilometres of trails incorporating:
 - > large loop – Ride the Mountain – cross-country trail with a network of down-hill and cross-country trails leading off this trail
 - > additional downhill and flow tracks including an adaptive gravity track and tracks suitable for the family market and beginners as well as more technical trails for experienced riders
 - > doubling the size of the development track with this designed for adaptive mountain biking with easy access points
 - a pump track and skills park
 - new amenities which are fully accessible
 - improved parking and facilities for event staging.

In addition, the terrain within the park may be suitable for an IMBA²¹ 'EPICS' MTB downhill trail while the Watagan Range (from Sugarloaf through to Ourimbah) could be suitable for an Epics cross-country trail. Epics trails offer back country/wilderness experiences and will attract overseas mountain bikers. Currently, Mount Buller in Victoria is the only Epics accredited trail in Australia. Dungog is looking at options to establish an Epics trail through the Barrington Ranges and a second trail through the Watagans would put the Lower Hunter on the international MTB 'map'. An Epics trail would enable Lake Macquarie (Awaba) to become an IMBA designated 'Ride Centre'.

- To develop and sanction new riding areas. In the short to medium term, it may be possible to sanction the Whitebridge Trails as part of developing the Belmont Wetlands – Jewells Swamp conservation and recreation precinct. This precinct is identified in Council's Local Strategic Plan. Consideration should also be given to retaining trails in the Holmesville and Teralba areas as part of the master-planning for these localities; and incorporating trails in the proposed Awaba Conservation Area.

- To grow MTB and allied events (e.g. adventure racing, cross (off-road) triathlons and gravel grinding). Mountain Bike Australia (MTBA) has introduced adaptive races into their national series and there may be potential to attract these and other adaptive events and activities.
- To leverage opportunities provided by rail access on the western side of the city. This will require providing trail links between stations and riding areas, with the priority being to link the proposed Morisset to Cooranbong cycleway to the Awaba MTB Park. This link is identified in Council's Walking, Cycling and Better Streets Strategy.
- To expand the number of MTB camps and clinics held at the Awaba MTB Park.

Challenges

- Unsanctioned trails cannot be marketed and promoted by Council's Tourism team. Poor quality and/or poorly maintained trails could potentially damage the city's reputation as a MTB destination. Illegal trails can also cause significant environmental damage and there is a possibility of a 'backlash' from local residents against illegal trail building and an influx of mountain-bikers in local streets, parks and reserves.
- Quality MTB trails are costly and resource intensive to develop and maintain.
- Achieving the potential of the Awaba MTB Park. As a volunteer organisation, HMBA faces significant challenges in finding the funds and resources to implement their plans and maintain the trail network. Limited of resources is also a constraint to increasing the number and scale of events held on-site.
- Glenrock SCA is at capacity at peak times. Population growth in the region is placing increasing pressure on the area. Limited parking around track-heads at the park entry points is resulting in on-street parking which in some localities is creating tension with local residents and/or posing a traffic hazard. The potential for over-crowding on the trails also has implications for the experience offered, safety and the reputation of the area.

Actions

- In conjunction with HMBA, other MTB groups and land managers, prepare a MTB strategy for the city.
- Grow Awaba MTB Park into one of the top riding destinations in Australia.
- Assist HMBA to secure funding to implement the masterplan for the park.
- Explore opportunities to work with the HMBA and other MTB groups to grow existing MTB events and attract additional events and activities, including adaptive mountain biking.
- Work with operators to explore opportunities to develop MTB packages
- Investigate the feasibility of establishing a downhill and/or cross-country Epics track.
- Endeavour to provide off-road trails to link the Awaba MTB Park with the Morisset to Cooranbong cycleway and with the proposed Cooranbong Eco Retreat.
- Work with NPWS to address issues with track head facilities and car parking around Glenrock SCA.
- Explore opportunities to develop, package and promote Lake Macquarie and the Hunter (Lake Macquarie, Dungog) as a premier destination for mountain biking.

²¹ International Mountain Bicycling Association





PADDLING

Lake Macquarie and its feeder creeks are ideally suited for paddling. Council has produced a Kayaking Guide which features six routes for paddling enthusiasts along the western side of the lake. Newy for Kids also promotes a guide to places around Lake Macquarie suitable for families to kayak and stand-up paddleboard (SUP).

Opportunities

- Promote places around the lake that are suitable for families to paddle.
- Paddling events.
- A water sculpture park/playground/kayaking skills course in one of the sheltered bays.
- Accessible/adaptive paddling, building on the accessible paddling offered to guests at the Catalina Lakefront Retreat.

- Kayaking and SUPs on Belmont Lagoon.
- Increase access to paddling tours and equipment hire (e.g. there may be potential for an escorted paddling tour which includes a walking tour of Pulbah Island with an Aboriginal guide).

Actions

- In the next edition of Councils' Kayaking Guide, incorporate a section on paddling for families taken from the Newy with Kids guide.
- Organise/Target paddling events and events that have a paddling leg (e.g. adventure racing).
- Investigate the feasibility of establishing a paddling sculpture park/playground/skills park' on the lake.
- Construct an accessible canoe/kayak launch platform in the Rathmines Precinct (and possibly in other localities) and promote paddling as an accessible activity.
- Provide opportunities for kayak/SUP hire and launch area on Belmont Lagoon as part of the development of the Belmont Wetlands State Park.
- Enable commercial paddling tour and hire companies to operate from foreshore reserves around the lake.

ROCK SPORTS

Abseiling into a waterfall gorge in the Watagan Mountains is one of the 'hero' images used in the promotion of Lake Macquarie, with abseiling and rock-climbing experiences provided by a commercial operator. Lake Macquarie also has a large indoor climbing and bouldering gym.

Bouldering is a growth sport which has gained significant popularity in recent years. Bouldering is a form of free climbing that is performed on rock formations or artificial rock walls without the use of ropes or harnesses. Most bouldering is undertaken by small informal social groups as day trips and short breaks. Climbing gyms, outdoor and rock sports clubs, and scout troops also organise bouldering trips.

The Crag (online directory for bouldering in Australia) identifies Pulse Climbing Gym and three outdoor bouldering destinations in Lake Macquarie, Glenrock SCA, Awabakal – Dudley and the Watagan Ranges. Combined, the three outdoor bouldering sites offer 24 locations, 824 climbing routes, and 5434 accents, far more than any other LGA within the Hunter Region.



Destination	Locations	Routes	Accents
Glenrock SCA	Five – Centennial, Middle Earth, The Fish Bowl, Waterfall, Bouldering	111	2410
Awabakal – Dudley	Three – North, Central, South	126	Six
Watagan Mountains	16 – Mt Sugarloaf, Mt Vincent, Brunkerville Gap, Barniers Road, Gate Crag, Mt Myall, Hunters Lookout, Tomteland, Iron Bark Ridge, Black Stump, Georges Road, Rope Road, Monkey Face, Ancient Remains, Dora Pinnacles and Central Area	587	3014

Within the surrounding region, Central Coast has a cluster of localities along its southern edge and the western side of Brisbane Waters, while Port Stephens has 15 localities at the base of the Tomaree Headland. Newcastle has three bouldering localities, two of which have only one route and Blackbutt Reserve which offers 20 routes and 53 accents. Cessnock has two localities offering six routes and six accents and there are no localities in Maitland.

Opportunity

- To promote bouldering as one of the outdoor and adventure experiences available in Lake Macquarie.

Actions

- Develop and promote bouldering as one of the outdoor and adventure experiences available in Lake Macquarie. (see Supplementary Documentation – Section 10 for supporting actions)



GOLF

In 2020, golf was the tenth most popular sport played in Australia. Golf was one of the few sports that could be played during the COVID-19 restrictions and as such there has been significant growth in golf club membership, social golf and the number of rounds played. According to Golf Australia golf club membership increased by 126 per cent from January to September 2020, with 71 per cent of new members aged 20-49 years. The number of social golf rounds has also grown substantially. Golf Australia is implementing a range of initiatives to capitalise on the interest being shown and grow the market. The younger golfers are consistent with the market being targeted by Council. Golf also appeals to the active 55 years and older market.

The Lower Hunter Region is a popular golf destination, known primarily for the golf resorts in Hunter Wine Country and Port Stephens and the Newcastle Golf Course. Tee times at these courses can be difficult to secure, particularly

for visitors who are not staying inhouse at the golf resort or who are not members of other golf clubs with reciprocal rights. These courses are also relatively expensive to play.

Lake Macquarie has four 18-hole golf courses and one nine-hole course, with the courses offering different experiences. Green fees for social golf are considerably lower than the resort courses. The 18-hole courses are ideal for social golf.

Actions

Explore with the golf clubs the opportunities to:

- target the social golf market
- grow golf events, including hosting a Lake Macquarie-wide event involving playing each of the courses.

MOTOR SPORTS ON LAND AND ON WATER

The proposed Black Rock Motor Park at Wakefield includes a 5.3km racing circuit, karting track, skid pan and 4WD trails, plus accommodation and club facilities. If the project proceeds, it will provide a hub for motor sports within the Lower Hunter Region. Lake Macquarie is also home to both the Fast and Loud Festival, which includes the Superboats event and Jet Buzz jet boat thrill rides.

Opportunities

- Motor sports and kart events both on and off-track (e.g. Swap Meets, Show and Shine).
- 4WD challenges and mud racing.
- Open events – general public using the track in their own vehicle.
- Adventure-based experiences such as ‘hot laps’
- Motor cycle events
- Cross promotion and packaging of on-land and on-water speed experiences and events.

Actions

- Once Black Rock Motor Park is operational, work with the operator to grow the motor-related events and activities and package and promote adventure-based experiences.
- Explore opportunities to cross promote and package on-land and on-water speed experiences and events.

STRATEGY PRIORITY 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 around the lake.

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.





NATURE AND CULTURE – A CHANGING FOCUS

Destination NSW has recently released a new brand for NSW: 'Feel New', which endeavours to add another dimension to 'seeing and doing' by capturing the emotions engendered by the setting and by participating. The marketing aims to inspire travellers to plan their next holiday in a way that is not just about what they want to see or do, but how they want to feel. 'Feel New' is a promise of the enduring emotional impact a holiday in NSW will have on travellers long after they've returned home to normal life.

The imagery used in the marketing campaign is concentrating on the 'collision of nature and culture' and featuring 'lesser known aspects' of destinations.

Council has already moved in this direction, combining tourism, arts and culture. The city's coastal and lake settings are providing the canvas for art installations and events and the marketing and promotional collateral features both 'hidden gems' of Lake Macquarie and the 'collision of arts and culture'. This, plus the activation and programming of spaces, is raising awareness of the city, forging a new identity and reaching new visitor markets.

PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

- Aboriginal experiences – Over the past decade destinations have been increasingly recognising their Aboriginal culture and heritage. This has been featured through dual naming of places, cultural displays, interpretation of significant sites, art galleries and art installations, bush food and medicine gardens, story gardens, events, cultural interpretative walks, guided Aboriginal cultural tours and participative activities such as weaving workshops and foraging and cooking classes. Rather than passive viewing, travellers are also increasingly seeking participative, educational and immersive experiences. Council has trialled an Aboriginal-guided cruise on Lake Macquarie which proved popular and could be developed as an attraction and is working with the Aboriginal community to establish a Keeping Place and Awabakal Cultural Centre. There are also opportunities for 'on Country' experiences such as a guided walk on Pulbah Island as part of a paddling tour or lake cruise, a quad bike tour on the sandhills and beach at Belmont Wetlands State Park and activities in the National Parks, State Conservation Areas and State Forests.
- Underwater sculpture park and above water installations: While this has been suggested for Lake Macquarie as part of the Lake Activation

Strategy, the southern end of the bay at Catherine Hill Bay could also be an ideal site, possibly utilising the historic jetty piers and underwater infrastructure as a 'canvas' (see Section 10.4). Allied to an underwater sculpture park is above water installations on the lake, possibly ones that people could paddle out to, to look at. This could add another attraction to the Lake Arts Precinct (see Section 10.5).

- Strong architectural and public art 'statements' in the development of the proposed lakeside marine hubs.
- Interpret the size of the lake through a sculpture – public art installation (see Section 10.1).
- Celebrate the city's heritage with initiatives including:
 - continuing to build the city's museum and exhibition space network
 - innovative adaptive re-use and interpretation of heritage sites, such as the Wangi Power Station and the Catherine Hill Bay jetty
 - featuring the city's geological and mining (coal and sand) history as part of the proposed coast walk and possible geotrail overlay (see Section 11.3).

ACTIONS

- Encourage and support initiatives from the Aboriginal community to deliver the Keeping Place and Cultural Centre, provide 'on Country' experiences and share and celebrate culture and stories.
- Continue to improve the presentation and activation of town centre, lake foreshore and key heritage precincts, including encouraging innovative, adaptive re-use and interpretation of heritage sites.
- Continue to use permanent and temporary art, including sculpture and lighting installations, to value-add to events, town centres, lakeside and coastal reserves and other strategic localities.
- Through public art, physically interpret the size of the lake, creating a new attraction and iconic photo opportunity.
- Continue to build the night-time economy, with the focus being on clustered rather than dispersed development to create vibrant dining and entertainment precincts.
- Prepare a development plan to expand and link the city's museums and exhibition spaces.
- Encourage strong architectural and public art 'statements' in the development of the proposed lakeside marine hubs (see Section 11.1).
- Investigate the feasibility of establishing underwater and/or on-water sculpture parks/ installations on Lake Macquarie and in the protected/jetty area of Catherine Hill Bay.

STRATEGY PRIORITY 4:

EVENTS AS DRIVERS OF VISITATION

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.

Council's Events and Festivals Strategy

Lake Macquarie hosts a diverse range of community, business, entertainment and sporting events. Each year, Council produces and coordinates seven major events and provides support and facilitation for a variety of community, sport and entertainment events.

In 2019, Council adopted an Events and Festival Strategy. The strategy recognises that events can be used to showcase the city and its assets; enhance the city's identity and shape perceptions; generate publicity and build awareness; drive visitation and generate flow-on economic benefits; address seasonality issues; and enhance lifestyle.

Events provide an opportunity to bring visitors and residents together, 'tell the stories', and create memorable experiences. For visitors, events provide a reason to visit – they are essentially a 'call to action', encouraging people to 'visit now'. Visitors often take local events into account in planning their itineraries.

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 multimedia productions. The refurbished Warners Bay Theatre baramayiba (300 seat) and Rathmines Theatre nawayiba (300 seat) have state-of-the-art equipment and offer a range of entertainment and performing arts events. The proposed conversion of the Morisset Community Hall into the Morisset Theatre will provide additional performance space.

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. Rail access is a major advantage for these venues.

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.

Opportunities

- A large performing arts, entertainment and convention centre.
- Continue to grow existing events and bid for 'foot loose' events that have the potential to generate significant visitation and economic benefits for Lake Macquarie.

- Continue to build the sporting events sector, working with clubs and associations to introduce festivals, coordinate events and bid for regional, state and potentially national and international events. Possible new events include:
 - Women's Sports Festival
 - 'Sail Lake Macquarie' festival/regatta – for sailing and possibly foil events
 - Water sports events (e.g. dragon boat racing)
 - golf events including partnering with the golf clubs to develop city-wide events playing multiple courses (e.g. Veteran's Week of Golf, Junior Championships)
 - Lake Macquarie cycling festival, incorporating road cycling, mountain biking, BMX and possibly gravel grinding
 - adaptive/inclusive sporting events (e.g. sailing and wind sports, paddling, mountain biking, plus court and field sports).
- Promote Lake Macquarie as a potential location to commercial event organisers (e.g. music promoters, companies that organise mountain biking, gravel grinding, trail running and adventure racing events).
- Aviation events – work with aviation tourism operators to develop and/or attract aviation events.
- Caravan, RV and possibly 4WD club rallies and events (e.g. the CMCA annual rally) hosted at Morisset Showground.

- Business events – work with accommodation and venue operators to target small to mid-size conferences and meetings. The proposed new hotels, Cedar Mill and Black Rock Motor Park will have function and/or meeting rooms, which will increase the supply of venues suitable for the business event market.
- Leverage the proposed Broadmeadow Sports and Entertainment Precinct in Newcastle City, positioning Lake Macquarie to attract accommodation bookings from attendees.

Challenges

- Highly competitive environment across all types of events. Within the Hunter Region, Newcastle is the primary destination for business events and professional sporting events, while Hunter Wine Country is known for its music events. To the south, the Central Coast is building its event sector with the focus being on sporting events.
- No large indoor venue suitable for business and entertainment events. Lake Macquarie lacks a major conference, function and performing arts/entertainment centre and upmarket hotels with quality conference facilities.
- Accommodation capacity constraints for larger conferences and major events.

- Catering for the ‘mega’ events proposed at Cedar Mill – ensuring that accommodation, roads, public transport, parking, and mobile phone networks have sufficient capacity to accommodate large crowds.
- Accommodation properties and venues are dispersed throughout the city, with resultant transport and logistical issues. Parts of the city are not well serviced by public transport.
- Refreshing existing events to ensure that they remain contemporary and vibrant.
- Dependence on volunteers. Many of the city’s events are delivered by volunteers, with the ability to grow these events limited by the number of volunteers available to run them. Bidding for and hosting events, particularly on a regular basis, may also be beyond the capacity of volunteer groups. For example, Awaba MTB Park would be ideal for a range of large MTB and possibly trail running events, however the Hunter Mountain Bike Club is constrained by the number of volunteers available to prepare the trails and help stage the event.
- The ‘red tape’ associated with the approval process, regulatory environment and compliance, with each of the land and water management agencies having different approval processes and requirements.

Actions

- Inadequate infrastructure in many coastal and lake foreshore reserves. This limits their potential to be used for events. Events generally need ready access to multiple power and water outlets as well as good amenities and parking for attendees. Good lighting is needed for evening events.
- Implement Council’s Events and Festivals Strategy.
- Assess the feasibility of establishing a large performing arts, entertainment and/or conference centre in Lake Macquarie.
- Continue to build the sporting events sector, working with clubs and associations to introduce festivals, coordinate events and bid for regional, state and potentially national and international events.
- Promote Lake Macquarie and its venues and localities (including National Parks and State Forests) to commercial event organisers and promoters, inviting them to stage events in the city.
- Work with operators of new venues (e.g. Cedar Mill, Black Rock Motor Park) to leverage opportunities for attracting ‘footloose’ events, generate publicity, value-add and package.

- Explore opportunities to host caravan, RV and 4WD club and association rallies at Morisset Showground.
- For community and sporting events that have the potential to grow significantly, explore options for overcoming volunteer capacity constraints.
- List conference, meeting and function venues and support services on the DNSW Meet in Regional NSW Conference and Business Events data base. There are currently no venues listed for Lake Macquarie.
- Partner with accommodation and venue operators to build the business event market. This could include producing promotional collateral such as a ‘Meet in Lake Macquarie’ directory.
- Partner with Newcastle to leverage the opportunities afforded by the proposed Broadmeadow Sports and Entertainment Precinct.
- Partner with Cessnock to leverage the opportunities afforded by the proposed Cedar Mill Hunter Valley venue.





STRATEGY PRIORITY 5:

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

Council needs to 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 be needed in the north and west of the city.

ACCOMMODATION

Lake Macquarie offers a diverse range of accommodation including quality resorts, corporate hotels, motels, serviced and holiday apartments, holiday rental properties, group accommodation, caravan parks, primitive camping areas, house boats and farm stays (see Section 4.4).

Challenges

Challenges with the current supply of accommodation include:

- lack of large, branded four-star or higher hotel and executive apartment properties
- significant reduction in caravan park accommodation over the past decade, at a time when the caravan and camping market is showing strong growth – the current supply does not meet demand during peak periods
- many of the motels are tired and dated and ripe for redevelopment
- limited supply of accommodation along the western side of the lake
- accommodation capacity constraints during the summer school holidays, long weekends and when there are major events on in the city and/or in Newcastle and Cessnock LGAs
- limited online presence of some accommodation properties
- many holiday rental/AirBnB properties are operating in isolation and do not see themselves as part of the tourism sector.

There are a range of accommodation projects underway, approved and mooted for the city. These projects include:

Underway

- upgrading Lake Mac Holiday Parks, including the conversion of the Sails Holiday Park at Belmont to cater for larger motorhomes (RVs)
- upgrading of the camping area at Morisset Showground, with the showground catering for RVs
- major refurbishment of the Squids Ink Motel to take advantage of its lakefront location.

Approved/Advanced planning stage

- Trinity Point Marina – 65 hotel rooms and 150 serviced apartments (approved) with the developer seeking to amend the development approval to 220 hotel rooms, 218 residential apartments and a 500-seat function centre
- Black Rock Motor Park – 37 visitor units, 64 owner units, 20 room lodge, 16 cabins
- Cedar Mill – accommodation including a 300-site caravan park with cabins and powered sites
- Cooranbong Eco Retreat – 20 eco cabins and 60 camp sites
- refurbishment of Rafferty's Resort.

Mooted or preliminary concept

- corporate hotel, Charlestown
- corporate hotel, Glendale
- Belmont Wetlands State Park primitive camping area
- sport and recreation centre, Morisset.

Opportunities identified

- Catherine Hill Bay – hotel on the jetty, boutique accommodation within the village
- Lake Arts Precinct (tourism land adjacent to the Museum of Arts and Culture)
- Glencore site – accommodation
- Wangi Power Station – accommodation as part of a mixed-use redevelopment
- Belmont – land owned by the Belmont 16-Foot Sailing Club.

The Trinity Point Marina, Black Rock Motor Park and Cedar Mill projects and, if they proceed, the hotel on the jetty at Catherine Hill Bay and accommodation within the historic Wangi Power Station, will be 'game changes' for Lake Macquarie. In addition, the proposed hotels at Charlestown, Glendale and possibly on the Glencore site will support growth in commercial and business park activities in the north and northwest of the city and are well positioned to leverage the proposed Broadmeadow Sports and Entertainment Precinct and attract overflow business from Newcastle, Cessnock and Maitland LGAs.



Opportunities

- Additional accommodation to the projects and concepts identified above, including:
 - boutique accommodation such as eco cabins and/or glamping in the Belmont Wetlands State Park – could be ‘over water’ accommodation on Belmont Lagoon
 - use of Council land adjacent to the northern end of Belmont Wetlands State Park for a new caravan park/cabin complex
 - eco accommodation and/or camping as part of the development of the Awaba Conservation Area
 - accommodation on land adjacent to the Royal Motor Yacht Club at Toronto
 - increasing the stock of house boats and charter yachts on the lake
 - agritourism, farm-stay, bush cabins and primitive camping on rural properties within close proximity to the Watagan Ranges.
- To leverage the 500-600 AirBnB-listed holiday accommodation properties within the city, encouraging them to provide a link to the Visit Lake Mac website, distribute promotional collateral, promote forth-coming events and possibly list on Council’s Book Easy site.

- Expanding and enhancing the online presence of accommodation properties.
- Refurbishing or redeveloping older motels. Some of these properties have prime lakeside sites and may be suitable for higher standard boutique hotel or serviced apartment developments.
- Building the city’s profile as an accessible/inclusive destination, leveraging Catalina Lakefront Retreat, the accessible accommodation in the Holiday Parks and other suitable properties.

Actions

- Ensure that planning regulations encourage and facilitate the development of new accommodation, including innovative forms of eco accommodation in environmentally-sensitive areas and on-farm (agritourism) accommodation.
- Continue to pursue opportunities to attract new accommodation, particularly large, branded hotel properties, to the city.

- Investigate opportunities to establish boutique eco accommodation in the Belmont Wetlands State Park.
- Encourage and support the refurbishment or redevelopment of dated motels to provide higher standard, contemporary visitor accommodation.
- Explore options to expand Lake Mac Holiday Parks and establish new parks.
- Explore opportunities with sailing clubs and other landowners to develop lakeside accommodation.
- Encourage accommodation operators to continue to improve their online presence, ensuring that they have a contemporary website with online booking facilities with this having a link to the Visit Lake Mac website; and leveraging opportunities provided by free and low-cost directories (e.g. travelling with kids, dog-friendly accommodation, DNSW regional conference directory if they have in-house meeting rooms).

VISITOR INFORMATION SERVICES

Information services are integral in supporting visitation. These services are an important link between local businesses and visitors, support the city’s marketing and promotion and, most importantly, make a visitor feel welcome. Information services also extend well beyond the visitor, with services provided to tourism and business operators, the travel trade, government agencies, tourism organisations and the local community. For visitors, information needs to be available and readily accessible from a range of touchpoints and devices at all stages in the path-to-purchase, during the journey and at the destination.

Research within Australia and internationally into the delivery of visitor information services has found:

- the tourism website is the most important information and marketing tool
- despite digital devices, travellers are still looking for contact with and recommendations from locals, as well as print-based information like maps, visitor guides and information sheets
- Visitor Information Centres are and will remain a significant in-region touchpoint for visitors, bringing visitors into contact with what the area has to offer, providing visitors with the information, advice and services needed to enhance their visit and encourage them to spend more time and money within the area.

Information on the changing nature of information services is given in Section 8 of the Resource Document.

INFORMATION SERVICES IN LAKE MACQUARIE

Visitor information services in Lake Macquarie are limited, with the geography of the city and multiple tourism precincts and access roads being a major challenge in delivering information services.

Lake Macquarie has an information outlet in the Swansea Library, with library staff assisting visitors. The outlet displays the visitor guides and product brochures with library staff answering questions. The outlet is difficult to find, primarily services visitors arriving and/or staying in the south-east corner of the city, and is a ‘passive’ space rather than actively inspiring and motivating visitors to explore the city.

The Visit Lake Mac website is the main promotional tool and information source with the visitor guide, activity guides and maps available online and in downloadable format. Printed guides are available from the Visitor Information Centre, libraries and other Council outlets throughout the city and from some accommodation properties. The Visit Lake Mac website has direct booking facilities through the Book Easy platform.

Council is restructuring information services to include Tourism Ambassadors and mobile and/or kiosk-style information outlets at strategic locations throughout the city and at major events.

Actions

- Utilise mobile and/or kiosk-style information outlets at strategic locations throughout the city and at major events.
- Grow the Tourism Ambassador program.
- Install information directories in Lake Mac Holiday Parks and other strategic locations throughout the city, with these including a QR code linking to the Visit Lake Mac website.
- Encourage accommodation properties (including AirBnB holiday rentals) and attraction operators to display/distribute the visitor guide, have a link to the Visit Lake Mac website on their website and to promote the website in their rooms.
- Continue to build Lake Macquarie’s online presence, including leveraging opportunities to list on third party sites.

SIGNAGE

Signage plays a significant role in how an area presents. It also forms part of the visitor information services infrastructure; raises awareness of what the area has to offer and encourages impulse stops and repeat visitation; and is a significant marketing and promotional tool. Within Lake Macquarie, Council is responsible for signage on local roads and in the public domain; Transport for NSW is responsible for highway and some regional road signage, while NPWS and Forestry Corporation are responsible for signage within their land holdings. Tourist attractions signage is overseen by the Tourism Attraction Signposting Assessment Committee (TASAC).

From a tourism perspective, signs are needed to:

- welcome visitors to the area and stimulate interest
- wayfind – to safely and efficiently guide visitors to their destination
- inform visitors of the attractions, facilities and services available
- direct visitors to information sources
- educate and inform.

In determining the signage needed, it is important to recognise that visitors are often not familiar with the area – they may have a very limited idea of where they are going and rely on the signs to ‘prompt’ and navigate. Visitors, particularly experienced travellers, look out for signs and symbols that will assist them – the ‘i’ sign, toilets, lookout, caravan parking, dump points etc.

Signs commonly used by visitors can be divided into road sign and destination signs.

Road signs²³ are used primarily for wayfinding and comprise:

- green directional signs: place names, directions and distances
- brown (TASAC) tourism signs: attractions and route markers
- blue service and facility signs – words and/or symbols.

Destination signs support road signs and contribute to the visitor experience. These signs include:

- billboard signs – advertising/promotional/motivational
- LGA/Region Gateway Entry signs – create awareness, reinforce brand, welcome visitors
- Town/Village Gateway Entry signs – create awareness, reinforce brand, welcome visitors
- Tourist Drive branding
- event signs – generally temporary signs that create awareness of forthcoming events
- information directories
- interpretative signs.

For visitors, the geography of the Lake Macquarie and the dispersed nature of attractions and facilities can be confusing. Many of the lakeside reserves and the coastal National Park/SCA entry points are accessed via suburban streets and are either not signposted or are poorly signposted. Likewise, in the west of the city, the National Parks, SCAs and State Forests are not well signposted. Directional and facility signage in the west of the city will need to be substantially upgraded to support the large visitor-generating developments proposed for the area.

Actions

- Undertake a detailed signage audit and progressively update and improve signage throughout the city.
- Explore opportunities to for improved signage along the M1 Motorway corridor.
- Work with NPWS and Forestry Corporation to improve directional and track-head signage to and within National Parks, State Conservation Areas and State Forests.

²³ The requirements in relation to size, content and placement and RMS and TASAC approval processes are available on the RMS (Transport for NSW) and Destination NSW (TASAC) websites. Signs generally need to conform to Australian Standards, with the symbols used on signs conforming to Australian Standard AS 2899.1 – 1986 (Public information symbol signs) and international standard ISO 7001

MARINE INFRASTRUCTURE

Recreational boating is extremely popular on Lake Macquarie, with the city having one of the highest rates of boating participation in NSW. The lake is twice the size of Sydney Harbour and is one of the best waterways for sailing in Australia for small to medium-sized vessels.

Maritime infrastructure on Lake Macquarie is spread across the lake and includes boat ramps, jetties, fuel, sewage pumpouts, slipping services and extensive onwater storage. Adequate infrastructure is needed to accommodate growth in recreational boating and facilitate regattas and other events on the lake.

Navigation access through the Swansea Channel is an ongoing issue for ocean-going vessels. The nature of the channel limits access for larger vessels to the lake as well as opportunities for the Lake Macquarie to host major off-shore boating, fishing and sailing events.

According to the NSW Maritime Infrastructure Plan 2019-2024, significant recent investments in improving marine infrastructure has provided quality assets around the lake. The remaining priorities are:

- providing an accessible navigation channel (including breakwaters) at Swansea Channel for large recreational and sailing vessels
- sufficient onwater storage capacity that meets demand for local vessels and recreational vessels visiting by sea

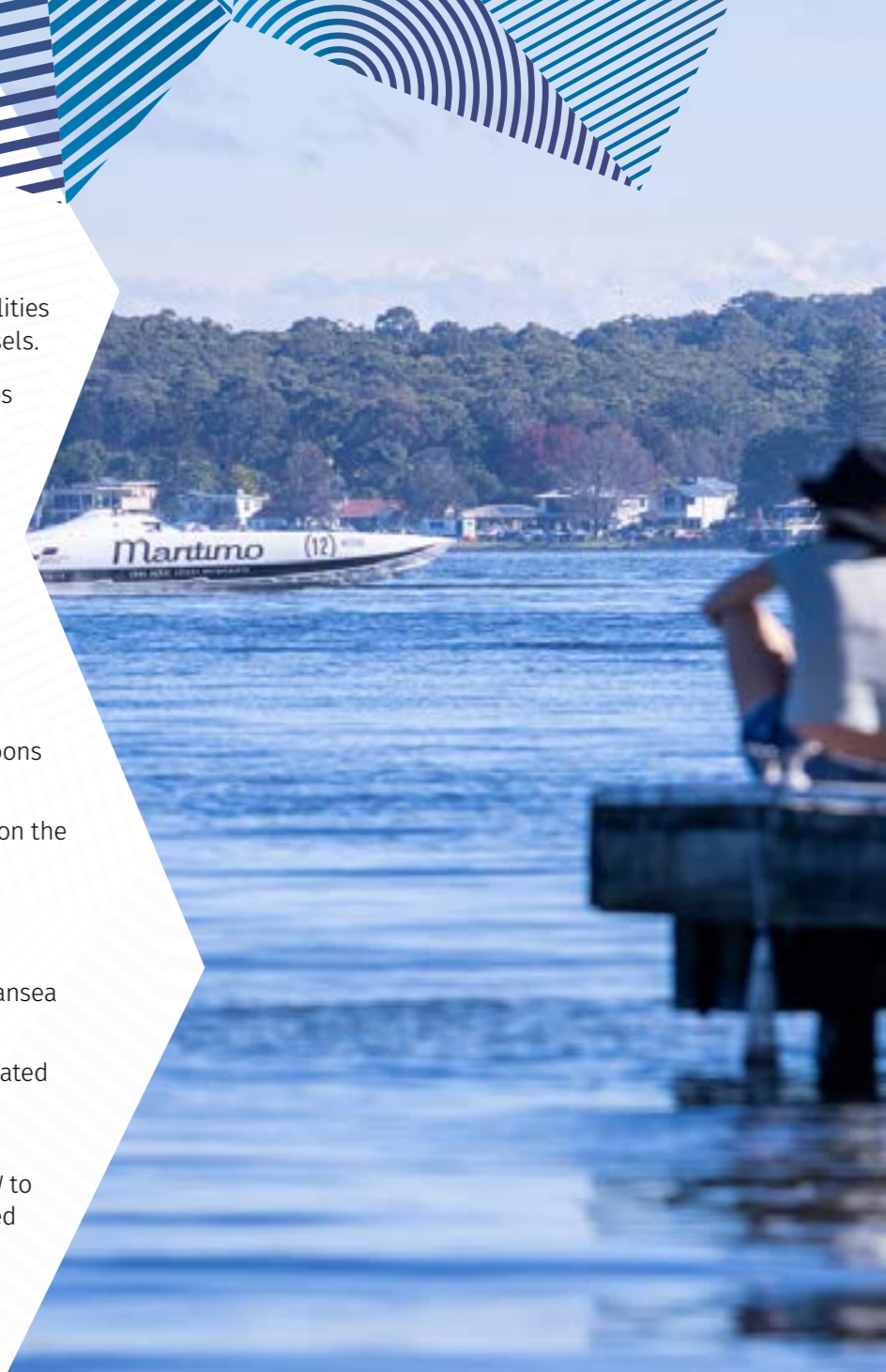
- sufficient fuel and sewage pumpout facilities that meet the needs of recreational vessels.

Council’s Lake Activation Strategy identifies the need for:

- marine hubs as strategic locations around the lake foreshore
- additional courtesy moorings for visiting vessels
- provision of pontoons adjoining popular boat ramps, particularly where there is tidal range
- accessible/inclusive jetties and/or pontoons in strategic locations
- accessible netted swimming enclosures on the western side of the lake.

Actions

- Advocate for improved access to the Swansea Channel for larger ocean-going vessels.
- Implement the marine infrastructure-related recommendations of the Lake Activation Strategy.
- Continue to work with Transport for NSW to deliver the marine infrastructure required to support growth in recreational boating and facilitate events.



RAIL ACCESS

Rail travel for leisure is becoming more prevalent with car ownership falling in high-density residential areas and an increasing proportion of younger people not getting their licence. Rail will play a part in accessing large events held at Cedar Mill and the Black Rock Motor Park. To the north, Dungog is seeing cyclists and mountain-bikers accessing the area by rail, with the potential for this to occur in Lake Macquarie. Probus and other walking and social groups also travel by rail, with Fassifern, Booragul and Teralba Stations being ideal stepping-off points to visit Toronto, the Museum of Art and Culture yapang, Teralba village and the Speers Point area and connect with the hop-on/hop-off ferry service. The very fast train project, if it proceeds, will also stimulate visitation, particularly day trips.

Actions

- Strengthen walking and cycling links between stations and visitor activity nodes (including the Awaba MTB Park and Cooranbong Eco Retreat).
- Formulate rail travel strategies for large events at Cedar Mill and Black Rock Motor Park and ensure that the stations have sufficient capacity and facilities. This could include temporary event platforms adjacent to the Cedar Mill site.

- Establish walking and cycling loops from the stations (e.g. Booragul Station – Museum of Art and Culture yapang – foreshore walk (or take a ferry ride) to Speers Point, returning via Teralba Station; Fassifern Station to Toronto – ferry ride to Booragul to the MAC yapang – foreshore walk – Teralba village – Teralba Station).
- Assess the feasibility of e-bike hire or a bike share program at key railway stations.
- Approach Trains NSW to include Lake Macquarie as a rail travel destination as part of their Newcastle and Hunter offering.
- Provide an information directory for the surrounding locality at the station exit points.
- Install wayfinding and facility signage.
- Advertise nearby attractions and events at the city's stations (visible to train travellers).
- Update and expand information and promotional collateral to include rail access and walking and cycling opportunities for those arriving by train.
- Direct market rail – develop and promote itineraries to Probus clubs and other walking and social groups.

ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGING STATIONS

By 2030, electric vehicles are forecast to account for around 20 per cent of new vehicles. Both public and private charging stations will be needed throughout the city. Public charging stations are currently available at the Lake Macquarie Visitor Information Centre, Speers Point, Warners Bay, Stocklands Glendale and Cameron Park Plaza. The Apollo Hotel and Caves Bar and Bungalows also have charging stations for patrons. Council's has adopted an Electric Vehicle Charging Strategy and is planning to have charging stations installed in each of the town centres and at Fassifern Station and Freemans Waterhole service centre²⁴.

Actions

- Progressively implement Council's Electric Vehicle Charging Strategy.
- Encourage accommodation properties and venues to install electric vehicle charging facilities for guests.

MOBILE TELEPHONE COVERAGE

While mobile telephone coverage is good throughout most of the city, coverage is patchy in the Watagan Mountains, with no coverage in some of the picnic and camping areas. The Watagan Mountains is subject to bush fires and landslips. The area is also used for outdoor and adventure-based activities which have a higher risk of accidents and mis-adventure and anti-social behavior is sometimes an issue. Improving mobile phone coverage in the area would improve safety and enable anti-social behaviour to be reported.

The network capacity in the Morisset area may need to be enhanced to cater for large festivals and events at Cedar Mill.

Actions

- Advocate for improved mobile telephone coverage in the Watagan Mountains.
- Assess the network infrastructure in the Morisset area to ensure that it has the capacity to cater for large events and if not, advocate for augmentation.

REMEDiate FORMER MINE AND POWER STATION SITES

The cessation of coal mining and the decommissioning of coal-fired power stations in Lake Macquarie will, after rehabilitation, release large tracts of land for redevelopment. Areas impacted by underground mining may need to be grouted before they can be redeveloped. Enabling infrastructure, including roads and utility services, will also be needed to facilitate development. Some of these sites will have tourism and recreational potential, with this needing to be taken into consideration in master planning these areas.

Actions

- Ensure that the tourism and recreational potential of the decommissioned sites are assessed as part of the master planning process.
- Advocate for expansion of the Newcastle mine grouting fund, or the establishment of a Lake Macquarie mine grouting fund, to facilitate the rehabilitation and release of land impacted by underground mining for development. Advocate and seek funding for enabling infrastructure to facilitate the redevelopment of these sites.



²⁴ Lake Macquarie City (2020) Electric Vehicle Charging Strategy 2020-2023

STRATEGY PRIORITY 6:

INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT – BUILD SKILLS AND CAPACITY

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.

Both Tourism Australia and DNSW are also seeking out '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.

Council has in place a Tourism Partnership Program. The program has a low participation fee (\$175 a year) with industry partners promoted through the Visit Lake Mac website, visitor guide and city map; able to display brochures at the VIC; able to list on the city's Book Easy website; and free or discounted access to cooperative marketing initiatives and industry breakfast briefings and networking events.

To help build knowledge and skills, Council organises industry breakfast briefings and distributes an e-newsletter to keep partners informed about changes occurring in the marketplace, visitation statistics and profiles and emerging opportunities. There are also a diverse range of resources and on-line training programs available from government agencies to assist business operators understand the marketplace, improve their on-line presence, grow their digital skills and become 'export ready'.

There is currently a major labour and skills-shortage across the tourism and hospitality industry.

Actions

- Council will continue to work with tourism operators to enhance skills and build capacity and keep them informed of the training and resources available as well as relevant grant programs.
- Council will work with the tourism industry and business chambers to identify labour and skills gaps, with this information shared with regional training providers.
- Encourage all tourism businesses to claim their Google business listing and improve their online presence.
- Endeavour to showcase local innovative tourism businesses and business operators, as a way of stimulating business evolution and growth.
- Facilitate industry networking.
- Encourage operators and their staff to participate in the Tourism Ambassador program.



STRATEGY PRIORITY 7:

GROW AND DIVERSIFY THE MARKET BASE

There are six traditional, well-established markets – visiting friends and relatives (VFR), school holiday family market, retirees, sporting event attendees, residents from the surrounding region, and business and work-related travelers.

In 2017, the change in the marketing direction to focus on building the Under 45 years outdoor and adventure seeker markets, has successfully attracted a younger demographic market to the City. It also 're-launched' and 're-invigorated' Lake Macquarie as a destination for its traditional holiday and leisure markets and stimulated growth in the short breaks and day trip markets. Likewise, the focus on building the events sector has driven growth in the day and short break visitation and raised the profile of LMC within the surrounding region.

There is still strong growth potential in the outdoor and adventure seeker markets with opportunities to target a specific niche and activity-based markets (e.g. sailing fraternity, mountain-bikers, surfers, etc) and attract and/or host outdoor and adventure-based activities and events.

In addition, the implementation of LMCC's numerous arts, events, cultural and heritage strategies, and town centre and foreshore masterplans will accelerate the transition of Lake Macquarie to a contemporary, vibrant, coastal city. This will drive growth in day visitors from the surrounding region and VFR visitors in the short to medium term and, over time, provide new products and experiences for the City's traditional markets.

The product development that is occurring within the City also provides opportunities to grow the accessible/inclusive tourism market positioning Lake Macquarie as a destination for adaptive/accessible outdoor and adventure-based activities and events; launching Lake Macquarie as a destination for business events; hosting large outdoor concerts and other events, and diversify into new markets such as motorsports.

Actions

- Continue to focus on building the 'Outdoor – Adventure – under 45 years' market. As part of this, target niche and activity-based markets (e.g. surfers, mountain-bikers).
- Maintain and grow the existing primary markets, strengthening what this market loves and introducing new products and experiences.
- Continue to leverage events and cultural programs to drive visitation and grow the regional day trip market, focusing on the shoulder and off-season periods.
- Grow 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, launch LMC as a destination for business events.



STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS



THE STRATEGIC PRIORITIES ARE:

1. Realise the potential of key localities
2. Enhance and expand outdoor, adventure and nature-based attractions and activities
3. A contemporary, vibrant city
4. Events as a driver of visitation
5. The infrastructure, facilities and services needed to enable and support growth in the visitor economy are in place
6. Industry development – build skills and capacity
7. Grow and diversify the market base.

Strategies and key actions to deliver on these priorities are provided in the following tables. Additional supporting actions are included in Section 10 of the Resource Document.

Actions are classified in terms of:

ACTION/PROJECT TYPE

Catalytic: Projects that are game changers in that they will significantly diversify and increase visitation and provide a base to take tourism to the next level (e.g. Cedar Mill project, improvements to the Swansea Channel for large, ocean-going vessels).

Enhancer: Strengthens and enhances the city's offer and/or visitor experience (e.g. activation of key precincts).

Enabler: Facilitates and supports growth in the visitor economy (e.g. revising planning controls, providing infrastructure and facilities).

Planning/Preparation: Exploring options, assessing the feasibility of a project and/or undertaking the work needed to take a project to 'shovel ready'.

Advocacy: Council to make representations to government agencies and other organisations to seek support and/or funding to advance the project.

STATUS

Existing: The action/project has been identified in other Council plans and strategies.

New: New opportunity/project identified through the destination analysis, consultation and/or research.

PRIORITY

High: Essential/Critical to driving growth in the visitor economy.

Medium: Needs to happen but will strengthen/support growth in the visitor economy.

Low: Could be delayed if funds and/or resources are not available.

Some of the actions classified as low are dependent on other initiatives or projects proceeding. If these projects proceed, then the priority of the actions will change to medium.

RESPONSIBILITY

Driver: The organisation that takes the initiative to implement action.

Partners: Organisations that will play a key role in implementing the action.

DNSSN	Destination Network Sydney Surrounds North
FCNSW	Forestry Corporation of NSW
HMBA	Hunter Mountain Bike Association
IMBA	International Mountain Bike Association
MTB	Mountain Bike
NSWP&E	NSW Planning and Environment
NPWS	National Parks and Wildlife Service
TfNSW	Transport for NSW

SCALE OF INVESTMENT

Relates to the scale of investment required by Council.

\$\$\$ Major investment – the project is beyond Council resources and significant external funding will be required for the project to proceed.

\$\$ Funds needs to be allocated and/or sourced. Funding needs to be budgeted in Council's Delivery and Operational Plans.

\$ The action will primarily involve staff resources and time rather than a significant financial outlay.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 1 : REALISE THE POTENTIAL OF KEY PRECINCTS

STRATEGY	ACTIONS	ACTION/ PROJECT TYPE	STATUS DRIVER	PRIORITY PARTNER	RESPONSIBILITY	SCALE OF INVESTMENT FOR COUNCIL			
1.1	Continue to enhance and activate town centre precincts	1.1.1	Progressively implement the streetscape masterplans for each of the designated town centres	Enhancer	Existing	Medium	Council	Business chambers	\$\$
		1.1.2	Implement the Toronto and Belmont Foreshore master plans	Enhancer	Existing	Medium	Council		\$\$
		1.1.3	Implement the West Wallsend Heritage Streetscape Master Plan	Enhancer	Existing	Medium	Council		\$\$
		1.1.4	Continue to activate key visitor precincts – Speers Point, Warners Bay, Booragul, Belmont foreshore, and Toronto	Enhancer	Existing	Medium	Council	Business chambers	\$\$
1.2	Activate Lake Macquarie – the waterway and foreshore reserves	1.2.1	Implement the Lake Activation Strategy with the priority being to establish marine tourism hubs at strategic locations around the lake	Enhancer and Enabler	Existing	High	Council	TfNSW	SSS
		1.2.2	Leverage and promote the ferry service as a connecting link between Lakeside walking and cycling trails	Enhancer and Enabler	New	Medium	Council	Ferry operator	\$
		1.2.3	Through public art, physically interpret the size of the lake, creating a new attraction and iconic photo opportunity	Enhancer	New	Low	Council		\$\$
		1.2.4	Improve the Swansea Channel so that it is safer and suitable for larger, ocean-going vessels	Catalytic	Existing	High	TfNSW	Council	\$\$\$
		1.2.5	Formulate and implement a strategy to attract high-performance water sport training facilities and activities	Planning	Existing	Medium	Dantia	Council Office of Sport	\$ (planning)
		1.2.6	Develop and position Lake Macquarie as a destination for inclusive and adaptive sailing, paddling, water skiing and other on-water activities and events	Enhancer and Enabler	New	Medium	Council	Disability Sports Australia/local and regional sporting groups	\$ (planning) \$\$ (infrastructure and facility development)
		1.2.7	Formulate and implement a strategy to build the ocean-going sailing and cruising markets, and 'deep sea' events (Swansea Channel dependent)	Planning	New	Low	Council	Dantia Marina operators	\$\$
		1.2.8	Investigate the feasibility of establishing a large marina and dry-stack facility with accommodation and other services (Swansea Channel dependent)	Enhancer and Enabler	New	Low	Dantia	Council TfNSW	\$\$

STRATEGY	ACTIONS	ACTION/ PROJECT TYPE	STATUS DRIVER	PRIORITY PARTNER	RESPONSIBILITY	SCALE OF INVESTMENT FOR COUNCIL			
1.3	Develop Belmont Wetlands State Park (BWSP) and surrounding reserves into a major tourism and recreation precinct	1.3.1	Investigate the feasibility of expanding the BWSP to include the Jewells Swamp and Belmont Lagoon and surrounding Council and Crown land	Enhancer	Existing	Medium	Council	Crown Lands	\$
		1.3.2	Resolve management issues	Enabler	Underway	High	Crown Lands	Council	\$
		1.3.3	Update the BWSP Plan of Management, assessing opportunities for providing a range of accommodation (including boutique eco accommodation), permitting commercial activities and developing walking, cycling and MTB trails as part of the planning process	Planning	New	High	Reserve Manager when appointed	Crown Lands Council (if not Reserve Manager)	\$\$
		1.3.4	Explore funding opportunities with the State Government to provide roads, infrastructure and visitor facilities	Enabler	New	High	Reserve Manager when appointed		\$(investigation)
1.4	Develop the Catherine Hill Bay area into a high-end boutique coastal destination	1.4.1	Assess the feasibility of retaining and re-using the iconic jetty for tourism and recreation	Planning Catalytic	New	High	Dantia	NSW Government Council	\$\$ (planning)
		1.4.2	Investigate opportunities for boutique accommodation	Planning	New	Medium	Dantia	Council	\$
		1.4.3	Investigate the feasibility of establishing an underwater sculpture park and/or utilising the jetty footings and other jetty materials to create a dive reef and trail	Planning	New	Low	Dantia	Council TfNSW	\$\$
		1.4.4	Work with NPWS to investigate options for interconnected walking and possibly mountain biking trails, including a Coast to Lake Walk and a coastal walk, with the walks supported by trail head facilities in Catherine Hill Bay	Planning	New	Low			\$
1.5	Support the ongoing development of Lake Macquarie Airport as a tourism aviation hub	1.5.1	Support the Airport Owners to resolve issues and secure grant funding to upgrade the airport infrastructure and visitor facilities	Advocacy and Enabler	Existing	Medium	Airport owners	Council	\$
		1.5.2	Investigate the feasibility of establishing an indoor aviation attraction at the airport	Enhancer	New	Low	Airport owners		Private sector
		1.5.3	Work towards hosting aviation events in Lake Macquarie, including an annual high-profile event	Planning	New	Low	Aviation tourism operators	Council	\$

STRATEGY	ACTIONS	ACTION/ PROJECT TYPE	STATUS DRIVER	PRIORITY PARTNER	RESPONSIBILITY	SCALE OF INVESTMENT FOR COUNCIL
1.6 Continue to develop and activate the Lake Arts Precinct	1.6.1 Formulate and implement a vision and master plan for the precinct, leveraging rail and ferry access	Planning and Enabler	New	Medium	Council	\$\$
	1.6.2 Formulate and implement a streetscape plan and activation strategy for Teralba	Planning and Enabler	New	Medium	Council	\$\$
	1.6.3 Leverage the re-opening of Awaba House to raise awareness of the precinct and build the functions, events and dining markets	Enabler	New	Medium	Council	\$
	1.6.4 With the re-opening of Awaba House and the inclusion of Teralba, review and refresh the brand and brand-promise of the precinct, with a focus on enriching arts, cultural, heritage and dining experiences against the stunning backdrop of the lake	Enabler	New	Medium	Council	\$\$
	1.6.5 Increase activation through additional events, venue programming and temporary and permanent art and/or lighting installations, including on-water activities and possibly utilising the Cockle Creek delta islands	Enhancer	Existing	Low - Medium	Council	\$\$
	1.6.6 Partner with local businesses to introduce more activities and experiences within the precinct	Enhancer	New	Medium	Council	Local businesses \$
	1.6.7 Monitor initiatives in thriving arts destinations nationally and internationally, and collect data and feedback from arts audiences and Lake Arts precinct visitors to assist with activation, programming and marketing	Enhancer	New	Medium	Council	\$
1.7 Develop Rathmines Foreshore into a major attraction and visitor activity hub for the western side of the lake	1.7.1 Progressively implement the Rathmines Master Plan and activate the precinct	Enhancer and Enabler	Existing	Medium	Council	\$\$\$
	1.7.2 Investigate options for utilising technology in interpreting the precinct	Planning Enhancer	New	Low	Council	\$
	1.7.3 Explore opportunities to encourage seaplane companies to operate flights to Rathmines	Planning	Existing	Low	Council Dantia	TfNSW \$

STRATEGY	ACTIONS	ACTION/ PROJECT TYPE	STATUS DRIVER	PRIORITY PARTNER	RESPONSIBILITY	SCALE OF INVESTMENT FOR COUNCIL
1.8 Build the Wangi Wangi – Awaba area into a key visitor precinct	1.7.4 Continue to incorporate accessible activities and facilities within the precinct, including and accessible fishing platform, an 'all-ability canoe and kayak platform and adaptive cycling/MTB trails	Enabler and Enhancer	New	Low	Council	Disability groups \$\$
	1.7.5 Encourage appropriate commercial operations within the precinct (e.g. lakeside dining, boutique accommodation, pop-up cafe, bicycle and water sports equipment hire)	Enabler	Existing	Medium	Council	TfNSW Dantia \$
	1.8.1 Progressively upgrade the Wangi Point Holiday Park and adjoining lakeside reserve	Enhancer	Existing	Medium	Council	NPWS \$\$
	1.8.2 Advocate for tourist accommodation, attractions, actions and facilities to be included in the development of the Wangi Power Station site	Advocacy - Project is potentially catalytic	Existing	High	Council	\$
	1.8.3 Undertake the planning and investigations need to take the proposed Awaba Conservation Area to 'shovel ready' status	Planning	Existing	Medium	Council	Crown Lands \$\$
	1.8.4 Explore opportunities to establish a wildlife conservation project on part of the Awaba Conservation Area	Planning	New	Medium	Council	NPWS Australian Wildlife Conservancy Other conservation organisations \$

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 2 : ENHANCE AND EXPAND OUTDOOR, ADVENTURE AND NATURE-BASED ATTRACTIONS AND ACTIVITIES

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.

STRATEGY	ACTIONS	ACTION/ PROJECT TYPE	STATUS DRIVER	PRIORITY PARTNER	RESPONSIBILITY	SCALE OF INVESTMENT FOR COUNCIL
2.1 Improve access to and facilities within National Parks, State Conservation Areas and Nature Reserves	2.1.1 Seek to work with NPWS to adopt an integrated approach to address urban-park interface issues and to plan for and develop track head facilities including off-street parking areas	Planning/ Enabler	New	Medium	Council NPWS	\$
	2.1.2 Advocate for improvements to the visitor facilities and walking tracks in the National Parks and SCA's within the city	Advocacy	New	Medium	Council NPWS	\$
	2.1.3 Ensure that Council provides input in the preparation of plans of management and reviews draft plans when on exhibition	Planning/ Enabler	New	Medium	Council	\$
2.2 Improve access to and facilities and attractions within State Forests	2.2.1 Advocate for additional resources to manage and police State Forests within Lake Macquarie	Advocacy	New	Medium	Council	\$
	2.2.2 Improve directional signage to and within the State Forests	Enhancer	New	Medium	Council FCNSW	\$\$
	2.2.3 If Black Rock Motor Park does not proceed, explore other options to establish an off-road 4WD and trail bike park, utilising areas degraded by coal mining	Planning	New	Low	Council Dantia	\$
2.3 Continue to improve and expand walking and bushwalking experiences	2.3.1 Progress the planning of the Coastal Walk, taking the project to 'shovel-ready' status to enable grant funding to be sourced	Planning	Existing	Medium	Council NPWS	\$\$
	2.3.2 Improve directional and track head signage for the walks featured in the Walking Trail Guides	Enhancer	New	Medium	Council NPWS FCNSW	\$\$
2.4 Position Lake Macquarie as the 'sailing capital of Australia'	2.4.1 Work with sailing clubs to identify opportunities for introducing additional activities (e.g. dining, functions, equipment hire) and navigate the planning approval process	Enabler	New	Low	Council/ Dantia	Crown Lands Sailing clubs \$
	2.4.2 Establish the 'Sailing School of Excellence'	Enabler	Existing	Medium	Dantia Council Australian Sailing	\$\$\$

STRATEGY	ACTIONS	ACTION/ PROJECT TYPE	STATUS DRIVER	PRIORITY PARTNER	RESPONSIBILITY	SCALE OF INVESTMENT FOR COUNCIL
	2.4.3 Advocate for the Hunter Academy of Sport to introduce sailing programs based at Lake Macquarie and for the NSW Institute of Sport to run sailing programs in Lake Macquarie	Advocacy	New	Low	Council Dantia	\$
	2.4.4 Investigate opportunities to become a specialist centre for wind and kite foil training and events	Planning	New	Medium	Council Australian Sailing Windsurfing NSW	\$
	2.4.5 Investigate opportunities to become a centre for adaptive/inclusive sailing and wind sport activities and events	Planning	New	Medium	Council Australian Sailing Windsurfing NSW Disability Sports organisations	\$
	2.4.6 Introduce a Sail Lake Macquarie festival/regatta	Enhancer	Existing	Low	Council	Sailing clubs \$\$
	2.4.7 Work with the sailing clubs to develop and promote an annual sailing events calendar	Enabler	Existing	Medium	Council	Sailing clubs \$
	2.4.8 Assist the sailing clubs and wind sports associations to attract and host state, national and potentially international events	Enabler	New	Medium	Council	Sailing clubs \$
2.5 Leverage opportunities to strengthen Lake Macquarie as a destination for cycling	2.5.1 Progressively implement the Lake Macquarie 'Walking, Cycling and Better Streets' Strategy, taking into consideration tourism opportunities when planning and developing new cycleways and shared pathways	Enabler and Enhancer	Existing	Medium	Council	\$\$\$
	2.5.2 Ensure that the city's cycleways are mapped on key cycling websites and the information and images are current	Enabler	New	Low	Council	\$
	2.5.3 Approach cycle tour operators to include Lake Macquarie as part of their tour programs	Enabler	New	Low	Council	\$
	2.5.4 Assess the feasibility of establishing a bike share operation within the city	Planning	New	Low	Dantia Council	\$
	2.5.5 Work with Central Coast Council to complete the Coastal Cycleway	Planning	Existing	Low	Council Central Coast Council	\$\$\$

STRATEGY	ACTIONS	ACTION/ PROJECT TYPE	STATUS DRIVER	PRIORITY PARTNER	RESPONSIBILITY	SCALE OF INVESTMENT FOR COUNCIL
2.6 Position Lake Macquarie as a premier destination for mountain biking	2.6.1 In conjunction with Hunter Mountain Bike Association, other MTB groups and land managers, prepare a mountain bike strategy for the city	Planning	New	Medium	Council	NPWS, HMBA, \$S other MTB groups
	2.6.2 Grow Awaba MTB Park into one of the top riding destinations in Australia	Enabler and Enhancer	New	Medium	HMBA	FCNSW Council \$\$\$
	2.6.3 Explore opportunities to work with the HMBA and other MTB groups to grow existing MTB events and attract additional events and activities, including adaptive mountain biking	Planning	New	Medium	Council	HMBA, other MTB groups, MTB event promoters \$
	2.6.4 Investigate the potential for an IMBA designated Epic cross-country MTB trail to run the length of the Watagan Ranges	Planning	New	Low	HMBA	Council, NPWS FCNSW \$\$
	2.6.5 Endeavour to provide off-road trails to link the Awaba MTB Park with the Morisset to Coorabong cycleway and with the proposed Coorabong Eco Retreat	Enabler and Enhancer	Existing	Low	Council	NPWS, FCNSW \$\$
	2.6.6 Explore opportunities to develop, package and promote Lake Macquarie and the Hunter (Lake Macquarie, Dungog) as a premier destination for mountain biking	Planning	New	Medium (as part of the DMP review)	DNSSN	Council, HMBA, Ride Dungog \$
2.7 Continue to expand and promote paddling opportunities	2.7.1 Continue to improve, develop and promote paddling infrastructure and facilities, including adaptive/inclusive facilities	Enabler and Enhancer	Existing	Low	Council	\$\$ (infrastructure) \$ (promotion)
	2.7.2 Organise/Target paddling events and events that have a paddling leg (e.g. adventure racing)	Enabler	New	Low	Council	Event organisers \$
	2.7.3 Investigate the feasibility of establishing a paddling 'sculpture park/playground/skills park' on the lake	Planning	New	Low	Council	TfNSW \$\$\$
2.8 Diversify the city's rock sports 'offer'	2.8.1 Develop and promote bouldering as one of the outdoor and adventure experiences available in Lake Macquarie	Enabler	New	Low	Council	The Crag \$

STRATEGY	ACTIONS	ACTION/ PROJECT TYPE	STATUS DRIVER	PRIORITY PARTNER	RESPONSIBILITY	SCALE OF INVESTMENT FOR COUNCIL
2.9 Leverage golfing opportunities	2.9.1 Explore with the golf clubs the opportunities to: target the social golf market.	Planning	New	Low	Council	Golf clubs \$
	grow golf events, including hosting a city-wide event involving playing each of the courses.					
2.10 Develop the motorsports sector	2.10.1 Once Black Rock Motor Park is operational, work with the operator to grow the motor-related events and activities and package and promote adventure-based experiences	Enhancer	New	Medium	Black Rock Council operator	\$

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 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.

STRATEGY	ACTIONS	ACTION/ PROJECT TYPE	STATUS DRIVER	PRIORITY PARTNER	RESPONSIBILITY	SCALE OF INVESTMENT FOR COUNCIL
3.1 Support the development of Aboriginal tourism	3.1.1 Encourage and support 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	Enhancer	Existing	Medium	Council	Aboriginal community \$
	3.2.1 Encourage innovative, adaptive re-use and interpretation of heritage sites	Enabler	Existing	Low	Council	Site owners, NSWPE &E \$\$
3.2 Enhance and activate key tourism precincts through creative experiences	3.2.2 Continue to use permanent and temporary art, including sculpture and lighting installations, to value-add to events, town centres, lakeside and coastal reserves and other strategic localities	Enhancer	Existing	Medium	Council	Arts community \$\$
	3.2.3 Encourage strong architectural and public art 'statements' in the development of the lakeside marine hubs (see Section 11.1)	Enhancer	New	Medium	Council	Arts community \$\$
3.3 A strong and vibrant night-time economy	3.3.1 Continue to build the night-time economy, with the focus being on clustered rather than dispersed development to create vibrant dining and entertainment precincts	Enhancer	Existing	High	Council	\$\$
3.4 Develop the city's museum experiences	3.3.2 Prepare a development plan to expand and link the city's museums and exhibition spaces	Planning	New	Medium	Council	\$\$

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 4 : EVENTS AS A DRIVER OF VISITATION

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

STRATEGY	ACTIONS	ACTION/ PROJECT TYPE	STATUS DRIVER	PRIORITY PARTNER	RESPONSIBILITY	SCALE OF INVESTMENT FOR COUNCIL		
4.1	Provide a strong foundation for growth	4.1.1	Implement Council's Events and Festivals Strategy	Enabler and Enhancer	Existing	High	Council	\$\$
4.2	Remove constraints to growing existing events	4.1.2	For community and sporting events that have the potential to grow significantly, explore options for overcoming volunteer capacity and other constraints	Enabler	Existing	Medium	Council	\$
4.3	Establish/Attract new events	4.3.1	Continue to build the sporting events sector, working with clubs and associations to introduce festivals, coordinate events and bid for regional, state and potentially national and international events	Enabler	Existing	Medium	Council	\$
		4.3.2	Promote Lake Macquarie and its venues and localities (including National Parks and State Forests) to commercial event organisers and promoters, inviting them to stage events in the city	Enabler	New	Medium	Council	\$\$
		4.3.3	Work with operators of new venues (e.g. Cedar Mill, Black Rock Motor Park) to leverage opportunities for attracting 'footloose' events, generate publicity, value-add and package	Enabler	New	Medium	Council	Venue operators \$
		4.3.4	Explore opportunities to host caravan, RV and 4WD club and association rallies at Morisset Showground	Planning	New	Low	Council	\$
4.4	Leverage opportunities afforded by venues in adjoining LGAs	4.4.1	Partner with Newcastle to leverage the opportunities afforded by the proposed Broadmeadow Sports and Entertainment Precinct	Enabler	New	Low	Council	\$
		4.4.2	Partner with Cessnock to leverage the opportunities afforded by the proposed Cedar Mill Hunter Valley venue	Enabler	New	Low	Council	\$

STRATEGY	ACTIONS	ACTION/ PROJECT TYPE	STATUS DRIVER	PRIORITY PARTNER	RESPONSIBILITY	SCALE OF INVESTMENT FOR COUNCIL		
4.5	Grow the business events sector	4.5.1	Partner with accommodation and venue operators to build the business event market, including producing promotional collateral such as a 'Meet in Lake Macquarie' directory	Enabler	New	Low	Council	Venue operators \$\$
		4.5.2	List conference, meeting and function venues and support services on the DNSW Meet in Regional NSW Conference and Business Events data base – currently no venues listed for Lake Macquarie	Enabler	New	Medium	Council	Venue operators \$
4.6	Address gaps in supply	4.6.1	Assess the feasibility of a large multi-purpose performing arts, entertainment and conference venue	Planning	Existing	Medium	Council	Dantia \$\$

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 5 : THE INFRASTRUCTURE, FACILITIES AND SERVICES NEEDED TO ENABLE AND SUPPORT GROWTH IN THE VISITOR ECONOMY ARE IN PLACE

STRATEGY	ACTIONS	ACTION/ PROJECT TYPE	STATUS DRIVER	PRIORITY PARTNER	RESPONSIBILITY	SCALE OF INVESTMENT FOR COUNCIL
5.1 Improve, diversify and expand the accommodation sector	5.1.1 Ensure that planning regulations encourage and facilitate the development of new accommodation, including innovative forms of eco accommodation in environmentally sensitive areas and on-farm accommodation	Enabler	New	Medium	Council NSW P&E	\$
	5.1.2 Continue to pursue opportunities to attract new accommodation to Lake Macquarie, focussing on a high-end branded hotel	Enabler	Existing	High	Dantia Council	\$
	5.1.3 Encourage and support the refurbishment or redevelopment of dated motels to provide higher standard, contemporary visitor accommodation	Advocacy/ Enabler	New	Medium	Dantia Council Property owners	\$
	5.1.4 Explore options to expand Lake Mac Holiday Parks and establish new parks	Planning	New	Medium	Council	\$
	5.1.5 Explore opportunities with sailing clubs and other landowners to develop lake-side accommodation	Planning	Existing	Low	Dantia Council Crown Lands Site owners	\$
	5.1.6 Encourage accommodation operators to continue to improve their online presence	Advocacy/ Enabler	Existing	Medium	Council	\$
5.2 Increase access to visitor information	5.2.1 Utilise mobile and/or kiosk-style information outlets at strategic locations throughout the city and at major events	Enabler and Enhancer	Existing	Medium	Council	\$\$
	5.2.2 Grow the Tourism Ambassador program	Enabler and Enhancer	Existing	Medium	Council	\$
	5.2.3 Install information directories in Lake Mac Holiday Parks and other strategic locations throughout the city, with these including a QR code linking to the Visit Lake Mac website	Enabler and Enhancer	New	Medium	Council	\$\$
	5.2.4 Continue to build Lake Macquarie's online presence, including leveraging opportunities to list on third party sites	Enable	Existing	Medium	Council	\$

STRATEGY	ACTIONS	ACTION/ PROJECT TYPE	STATUS DRIVER	PRIORITY PARTNER	RESPONSIBILITY	SCALE OF INVESTMENT FOR COUNCIL
5.3 Improve directional, facility and other tourism signage	5.3.1 Undertake a detailed signage audit and progressively update and improve signage throughout the city	Planning	New	Medium	Council	\$\$
	5.3.2 Explore opportunities to for improved signage along the M1 Motorway corridor	Planning	New	Low	Council TfNSW	\$
	5.3.3 Work with NPWS and Forestry Corporation to improve directional and track-head signage to and within National Parks, State Conservation Areas and State Forests	Enabler and Enhancer	New	Medium	Council NPWS FCNSW	\$\$
5.4 Upgrade and expand marine infrastructure	5.4.1 Implement the marine infrastructure-related recommendations of the Lake Activation Strategy	Enabler	Existing	Medium	Council TfNSW	SSS
	5.4.2 Continue to work with TfNSW to deliver the marine infrastructure required to support growth in recreational boating and facilitate events	Enabler	Existing	Medium	Council TfNSW	SSS
5.5 Facilitate growth in rail tourism	5.5.1 Develop/Enhance walking and cycling links between railway stations and visitor activity nodes (including the Awaba MTB Park and Cooranbong Eco Retreat)	Enabler	New	Low	Council	\$\$
	5.5.2 Formulate rail travel strategies for large events at Cedar Mill and Black Rock Motor Park and ensure that the stations have the capacity and facilities – could include temporary event platforms adjacent to the Cedar Mill site	Planning and Enabler	New	Medium	Council TfNSW	\$(planning) \$\$\$
	5.5.3 Assess the feasibility of e-bike hire or a bike share program at key railway stations	Planning	New	Low	Council TfNSW	\$
	5.5.4 Approach Trains NSW to include Lake Macquarie as a rail travel destination as part of their Newcastle and Hunter offering	Enabler	New	Medium	Council TfNSW	\$
	5.5.5 Install information directories (for the surrounding locality) at station exit points and wayfinding and facility signage to link stations to visitor activity nodes	Enabler	New	Low	Council TfNSW	\$\$
	5.5.6 Update and expand information and promotional collateral to include rail access and walking and cycling opportunities for those arriving by train	Enabler	New	Low	Council	\$

STRATEGY	ACTIONS	ACTION/ PROJECT TYPE	STATUS DRIVER	PRIORITY PARTNER	RESPONSIBILITY	SCALE OF INVESTMENT FOR COUNCIL
	5.5.7 Direct market rail – explore itineraries to Probus Clubs and other walking and social groups	Enabler	New	Low	Council	\$
5.6 Cater for electric vehicles	5.6.1 Progressively implement Council’s Electric Vehicle Charging Strategy	Enabler	New	Medium	Council	\$\$
	5.6.2 Encourage accommodation properties and venues to install electric vehicle charging facilities for guests	Advocacy	New	Medium	Council	\$
5.7 Ensure mobile telephone services meet demand	5.7.1 Advocate for improved mobile telephone coverage in the Watagan Mountains	Advocacy	New	Low	Council	\$
	5.7.2 Assess the network infrastructure in the Morisset area to ensure that it has the capacity for large events (if not, advocate for increased capacity)	Planning/ Advocacy	New	Medium	Council Network providers	\$
5.8 Remediate former coal mine and power station sites	5.8.1 Ensure that the tourism and recreational potential of the decommissioned sites are assessed as part of the master planning process	Planning	New	Medium	Council Dantia	\$\$
	5.8.2 Advocate for expansion of the Newcastle mine grouting fund, or the establishment of a Lake Macquarie mine grouting fund, to facilitate the rehabilitation and release of land impacted by underground mining for development	Advocacy	Existing	Medium	Council Dantia	\$
	5.8.3 Advocate, and seek funding for enabling infrastructure to facilitate the redevelopment of these sites	Advocacy	Existing	Medium	Council	\$

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 6 : INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT – BUILD SKILLS AND CAPACITY

Build skills and capacity within the tourism and hospitality sectors.

STRATEGY	ACTIONS	ACTION/ PROJECT TYPE	STATUS DRIVER	PRIORITY PARTNER	RESPONSIBILITY	SCALE OF INVESTMENT FOR COUNCIL
6.1 Build industry skills and capacity	6.1.1 Continue to work with tourism operators to enhance skills and build capacity and keep them informed of the training and resources available as well as relevant grant programs	Enabler	Existing	Medium	Council	\$
	6.1.2 Encourage all tourism businesses to claim their Google business listing and improve their on-line presence	Enabler	New	Low	Council	\$
	6.1.3 Endeavour to showcase local innovative tourism businesses and business operators, as a way of stimulating business evolution and growth	Enabler	New	Low	Council	\$
	6.1.4 Encourage operators and their staff to participate in the Tourism Ambassador Program	Advocacy	New	Medium	Council	\$
	6.1.5 Encourage operators to become ‘export ready’	Enabler	New	Medium	Council DNSW	\$
6.2 Address labour and skills gaps	6.2.1 Work with the tourism industry and business chambers to identify labour and skills gaps, with this information shared with regional training providers	Enabler	New	Medium	Council	\$
6.3 Facilitate industry networking	6.3.1 Deliver three networking tourism breakfasts	Enabler	Existing	Medium	Council	\$
	6.3.2 Review partnership program	Enabler	New	Medium	Council	\$

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 7 : GROW AND DIVERSIFY THE MARKET BASE

STRATEGY	ACTIONS	ACTION/ PROJECT TYPE	STATUS DRIVER	PRIORITY PARTNER	RESPONSIBILITY	SCALE OF INVESTMENT FOR COUNCIL
7.1 Strengthen and grow existing markets	7.1.1 Continue to focus on building the 'Outdoor – Adventure – under 45 years' market and, as part of this, target niche and activity-based markets (e.g. surfers, mountain bikers)	Enabler	Existing	Medium	Council	\$\$
	7.1.2 Target and build the existing primary markets, through quarterly destination campaigns	Enabler	Existing	Medium	Council	\$\$
	7.1.3 Leverage events and cultural programs to grow the regional day trip market, focusing on the shoulder and off-season periods	Enabler	Existing	Medium	Council	\$\$
7.2 Diversify the market base	7.2.1 Grow the accessible/inclusive tourism market, positioning Lake Macquarie as a destination for adaptive/accessible outdoor and adventure activities and events	Enabler	Existing	Medium	Council Tourism operators	\$\$
	7.2.2 As suitable new accommodation and venues become available, launch Lake Macquarie as a destination for business events	Enabler	Existing	Medium	Council Tourism operators	\$\$
	7.2.3 Leverage new products (e.g. Black Rock Motor Sports Complex) to build new markets	Enabler	Existing	Medium	Council Tourism operators	\$
7.3 Continue to produce marketing and promotional collateral	7.3.1 Continue to produce the Visitor Guide and related visitor publications	Enabler	Existing	Medium	Council	\$\$
	7.3.2 Ensure that the tourism website is regularly updated and refreshed	Enabler	Existing	Medium	Council	\$\$
	7.3.3 Continue to update the tourism image and video library	Enabler	Existing	Medium	Council	\$\$
	7.3.4 Produce a Business Events Directory	Enabler	Existing	Medium	Council	\$\$
	7.3.5 Produce display materials to be used in the mobile and kiosk information outlets	Enabler	Existing	Medium	Council	\$\$

MONITORING

It is important that Council monitor the effectiveness of its tourism development and marketing activities. This will assist in:

- providing an indication of whether the strategies and actions are effective in building visitation and/or achieving economic growth. Ineffective actions can be terminated or modified
- setting priorities and allocating funds and resources
- providing data to support funding applications, which is 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 Lake Macquarie
- 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-managed venues including Lake Macquarie Museum of Art and Culture yampang, 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 (i.e. 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.

REFERENCES

The following documents were reviewed as part of the preparation of this Destination Management Plan:

Australian Accredited VICs: A Strategic Directions Discussion Paper
Australia Council of the Arts (2020) Domestic Arts Tourism: Connecting the Country
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Australian Government Austrade (2017) Attracting Millennials to Regional Australia
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Austrade (2021) THRIVE 2030: National Visitor Economy Strategy
Belmont Wetlands State Park Trust (2010) Belmont Wetlands State Park Final Plan of Management
Dantia (2018) Lake Macquarie Economic Development Strategy 2018-2038
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Destination NSW Strategic Objectives
Destination NSW (2020) Nature Based Tourism in NSW

YE December 2019
Destination NSW Road Trippers to NSW
Destination NSW Domestic Caravan and Camping Travel to NSW
Destination NSW Youth Travel Snapshot
Destination NSW Short Breaks Snapshot
Destination NSW Over 55s Snapshot
Destination NSW NSW Family Market
Destination NSW Accessible Tourism
Destination NSW Visitor Economy Industry Action Plan 2030
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Lake Macquarie City Council (2013) Belmont Streetscape Master Plan
Lake Macquarie City Council (2013) Toronto Streetscape Master Plan
Lake Macquarie City Council (2014) Local Environmental Plan and maps
Lake Macquarie City Council (2014) Morisset Streetscape Master Plan
Lake Macquarie City Council (2015) Lake Macquarie Coastal Zone Management Plan
Lake Macquarie City Council (2016) Lake Macquarie

Multicultural Plan 2016-2026
Lake Macquarie City Council (2016) Swansea Streetscape Masterplan
Lake Macquarie City Council (2017) Charlestown Streetscape Masterplan
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Lake Macquarie City Council (2017) Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2017-2019
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Lake Macquarie City Council (2019) Aboriginal Community Plan 2019-2023
Lake Macquarie City Council (2019) Events and Festivals Strategy 2019-2024
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Lake Macquarie City Council (2020) Local Strategic Planning Statement
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Lake Macquarie City Council (2020) Together Lake Mac – Our Plan for a Sustainable City
Lake Macquarie City Council (2020) Youth Strategy
Lake Macquarie City Council (2021) Culturally Diverse Lake Macquarie Plan 2012-2024
Lake Macquarie City Council (2021) Cycling Strategy
Lake Macquarie City Council (2021) Lake Activation Strategy
Lake Macquarie City Council (2021) Lake Activation Strategy – Background Resource Document
Lake Macquarie City Council (2021) Lake Macquarie Sports Strategy
Lake Macquarie City Council (2021) Marks Point and Belmont South Foreshore Management Plan
Lake Macquarie City Council (2021) Morisset Showground – Plan of Management and Master Plan Issues and Opportunities Paper
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Waterways NSW (2002) Lake Macquarie Mooring Management Plan



Image credits

Page No.	Position	Description	Credit/Source
2		Caves Beach	Lake Macquarie City Council
3		Paddle Boarding Lake Macquarie	VisitNSW
4		Float your Boat event	Intouch Magazine
5		Lake Macquarie Sand Islands	Jenny Rand and Associates
6		Lake Macquarie	Fishing World
9	Left	Sailing on Lake Macquarie	growlakemac.com.au
9	Right	Jet Buzz jet boat	jetbuzz.com.au
10		Boarding House Dam, Watagans National Park	NPWS
11	Background	Paddle Boarding Lake Macquarie	Lake Macquarie City Council
11	Top Circle	Caves Beach	Timeout.com.au
11	Circle 2	Skydiving – Sky Dive the Beach	Headout.com
11	Circle 3	Mountain Biking Awaba MTB Park	Rocky Trail Entertainment
11	Bottom Circle	Sculpture, Booragul Sculpture Park	The Australian
13		Fernleigh Track	Hiking the World
14		Red Bluff Board Walk	Lake Macquarie City Council
16	Left	Multi Arts Pavilion mima	Lake Macquarie City Council
16	Right	Fireworks, Lake Macquarie Festival	Lake Macquarie City Council
17		Dining, Caves Beach Bar and Bungalow	One Agency Eastlakes
19	All	Hero images	Lake Macquarie City Council
20	All	Hero images	Lake Macquarie City Council
21	Top	Live on the Lake Concert – Toronto Hotel	Toronto Hotel
21	Bottom	Adaptive Mountain Biking, Awaba MTB Park	Hunter MTB Association
23	Top Left	Belmont Holiday Park	Caravan and Camping NSW
23	Bottom Left	Caves Beach Bar and Bungalows	Trivago
23	Right	Camping, Onley State Forest	Jenny Rand and Associates
24		Marmong Point Marina	Australia 247
25		Concept Drawing Cedar Mill Entertainment Precinct	Lake Macquarie City Council
30		Concept Drawing - BlackRock Motor Sports Park	Dantia
31		Sailing Regatta Lake Macquarie	Belmont 16-Foot Sailing Club Facebook
34		Lake Macquarie Regional Football Facility	Northern NSW Football
36		Historic Wangi Power Station	Hunter Living Histories
43	Left	Walking Track, Wallarah National Park	NPWS
43	Right	Matt Hall Racing Thrill Ride	redballon.com.au

Page No.	Position	Description	Credit/Source
45		Emerald Park Glamping, Mandalong	Hip Camp
46	Background	Trinity Point Marina	Trinity Point Marina Facebook
46	Circle – Left	Lookout, Watagans National Park	NPWS
46	Circle – Middle	Sculpture – Alex Seeon’s ‘Solist’, Warners Bay	CJ Levinson Photography
46	Circle - Right	Fernleigh Track	Armsign
50		Sunset Lake Macquarie	Visit Lake Mac Facebook
55		Historic Jetty Catherine Hill Bay	CHBay Progress Association Facebook
60	Left	Wangi Point, Lake Macquarie State Conservation Area	Newy with Kids
60	Right	Wangi Historic Power Station	Jenny Rand and Associates
62		Awabakal Nature Reserve	Hunter and Coastal Lifestyle Magazine
63		Camping, Onley State Forest	Jenny Rand & Associates
64		Adams 10 Australian Sailing Championships Lake Macquarie Sail World 2021	
71		Example of an on-water sculpture	Keith Chidzey Sculptor
72		Bouldering Glenrock State Park	The Crag
78		NSW Surf Life Saving Championships, Redhead	Lake Macquarie City Council
85		Superboats, Marmong Point Marina	Newcastle 360
86		Kayak Hire, Lake Macquarie Watersports	Visit Lake Mac Facebook
87	Right	Lunch at Lake Macquarie Yacht Club	Lake Macquarie City Council
89		Surfing Championships	Visit Lake Mac Facebook
96	Left	Multi-Arts Pavilion mima	Architecture and Design
96	Middle	Gunyah Hotel Belmont	Gunyah Hotel Facebook
96	Right	The Corner, Charlestown	HUNTERhunter
101	Left	Kayaking Lake Macquarie	VisitNSW
101	Middle	Bushwalking Watagan Ranges	VisitNSW
101	Right	Family fishing, Lake Macquarie	Visit Lake Mac Facebook
102	Left	Cafe, Warners Bay	Warners Bay Primary School P&C Facebook
102	Right	Markets	Visit Lake Mac Facebook
134	Left	Yuelarbah Walking Track	Lake Macquarie City Council

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
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

Lake Macquarie Tourism

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