

Clarence Valley Council

DRAFT Destination Management Plan

2024 - 2030



Enquiries

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Clarence Valley Council

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Acknowledgment

We acknowledge the Bundjalung, Gumbaynggirr and Yaegl people as the Traditional Owners of the land on which we live and work. We honour the First Nations peoples culture and connection to land, sea and community. We pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging.

First Nations peoples continue to show great resilience and generosity of spirit towards other peoples with whom they now share their land and waters. Clarence Valley Council recognises that by acknowledging our shared past, we are paving the way for a future where all Australians are embraced.



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Message from the General Manager

In the Clarence Valley, we are fortunate to have natural beauty, rich cultural heritage, and a vibrant community spirit.

Our region boasts pristine beaches, ancient national parks and spectacular river systems, making it an ideal destination for holidaymakers. We understand that visitors play a crucial role in the economic growth of the Clarence Valley, and we are committed to maintaining a balance that benefits everyone who lives, works and plays here.

The Destination Management Plan outlines the shared interests of the community and its visitors. As we work towards a future that is both welcoming and sustainable, we encourage visitors to enjoy our region with care and mindfulness.

As we navigate the ever-changing landscape of travel and tourism, the Clarence Valley is dedicated to providing exceptional experiences while preserving our natural and cultural heritage for future generations.



Laura Black

**Clarence Valley Council
General Manager**

Overview

Purpose of the DMP

The purpose of the Clarence Valley Destination Management Plan (CV DMP) is to provide a common vision, strategic directions, and practical steps to sustainably develop and manage the Clarence Valley Visitor Economy between 2024 and 2030.

The DMP will maximize the benefits of tourism for the region while preserving and enhancing its natural and cultural assets for local communities and businesses today and into the future.

The CV DMP aligns with the Destination North Coast DMP, NSW Visitor Economy Strategy 2030 (NSW VES), as well as with the aspirations of our community. The plan will support sustainable growth of the visitor economy in a constantly changing and competitive market.

Visitor Economy Explained

The term "visitor economy" referenced throughout the cv DMP refers to the modern definition of "tourism". It includes people travelling not only for leisure but also for events, business, work, education, or visiting friends and relatives. The visitor economy incorporates industries that directly cater to visitors, such as accommodation, tours, and attractions, as well as indirectly, such as retail, medical, and food production.

"The visitor economy is EVERYONE'S business."

Visitors come to NSW for many reasons: to holiday; visit family and friends; to attend an event; to experience arts and culture; to study or learn; to participate in sport, entertainment, employment, business meetings; for presentations and conference and work incentives or rewards, for shopping or health purposes. – NSW VES 2030

Strategic Context

The CV DMP has been strategically developed in alignment with regional, state, and national frameworks to effectively contribute to and benefit from the broader vision for the visitor economy.

National Austrade – Thrive 2030: The Re-imagined Visitor Economy

State Destination NSW – Visitor Economy Strategy 2030

Regional Destination North Coast - Destination Management Plan 2030

Local Clarence Valley Destination Management Plan 2024-2030

Other local plans and strategies consulted in the development of the CV DMP include:

- The Clarence 2032 Strategic Plan
- Clarence Valley Regional Economic Development Strategy
- Clarence Valley Employment Land Strategy 2022
- Clarence Valley Riverway Masterplan II
- Disability Inclusion Action Plan

Five Guiding Principles inform the NSW Government’s policy and investment in the visitor economy.

Put the Visitor First	Accelerate Digital Innovation	Lead with our Strengths	Move Fast, Be Responsive and Agile	Collaborate with Industry and Government
We have put the visitor front and centre of this strategy. A greater understanding of potential visitors by segment will deliver high performance marketing solutions and improve the visitor experience.	We will use technology to deliver personalised marketing to potential visitors, streamlined interactions between government and industry, and to enhance the visitor experience.	We will focus on the distinctive character and features of NSW and our people to help us stand out in a crowded market.	We will build agility into the way we operate so we can take advantage of opportunities as they emerge and adapt to changing conditions.	We will foster greater engagement and cooperation with the industry to deliver the vision and take a whole of-government approach to growing the NSW visitor economy.

Table: NSW Government Five Guiding Principles for visitor economy policy and investment

Our Partners

Building upon a culture of collaboration is essential for realising the long-term goals of the Clarence Valley DMP and enhancing the broader visitor economy. This collaborative spirit extends to strategic partners at the local, regional, state, and national levels, including:

Local Organisations:

- Clarence Valley Council
- Events Organisations
- Chambers of Commerce
- Internal Council Stakeholders

Local Community:

- Residents and Ratepayers
- Local Visitor Economy Businesses
- Community Groups
- First Nations Traditional Owners organisations, LALCs

Neighbouring Local Government Authorities

Regional Stakeholders:

- Destination North Coast (DNC)
- Northern Rivers Tourism Management Group
- Regional Visitor Economy Businesses
- Industry Associations e.g. Northern Rivers Food Co.

State Organisations:

- Destination NSW
- Business NSW
- NSW Government Departments (e.g., Regional NSW, National Parks & Wildlife Service)
- NSW Tourism Industry Associations
- NSW Arts, Culture, and Creative Industries

National Organisations:

- Ecotourism Association of Australia
- Tourism Australia
- Tourism Research Australia
- National Tourism Industry Associations
- Australian Tourism Data Warehouse

Through effective partnerships and a collaborative approach, the Clarence Valley aims to leverage its unique assets and strengths, driving sustainable growth and enhancing the visitor experience for all.

Visitor Economy Snapshot

DOMESTIC VISITORS¹

5-YEAR AVERAGE (2018-2022)

Domestic Daytrip Visitors – **508,257**

Domestic Visitor Nights – **1,976,266**

INTERNATIONAL¹

5-YEAR AVERAGE (2018-2022)

Total International Visitors **24,793**

Visitor International Nights **118,116**

SPEND²

In 2021/22, the total tourism sales in the Clarence Valley Council area was

\$257.1 million

Total value added to the local economy **\$125.46 million**

DOMESTIC DAY-TRIPPERS¹

5-YEAR AVERAGE

Total – **508,257**

LENGTH OF STAY¹

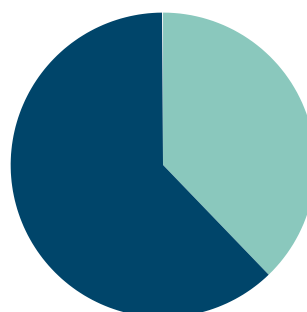
5-YEAR AVERAGE

Domestic – **3.4 days**

International – **4.8 days**

EMPLOYMENT³

In 2016, there were **1,348** people who make up the tourism workforce in Clarence Valley Council area



37.8% worked full-time
56.2% worked part-time or were away from work.

REASON FOR VISITING¹

5-YEAR AVERAGE

Domestic overnight visitors

Holiday – **50.5%**

Visiting friends and relatives – **27.3%**

Business – **17.1%**

Other reason – **5.2%**

¹ Tourism Research Australia, National Visitor Survey and International Visitor Survey 2021/22.
² Economy.id Clarence Valley. National Institute of Economic & Industry Research (NIEIR), 2021/22
³ Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) – Census 2016 – by place of work

TOURISM VALUE

5-YEAR AVERAGE

Employment –

2021/2022 – **1,762** (-3.76%)

2018/2019 – **1,833**

Total Value Added –

2021/2022 – **\$125.5m** (-14.72%)

2018/2019 – **\$147.17**

Total Expenditure –

2021/2022 – **\$257.1m** (-11.78%)

2018/2019 – **\$291.44m**

2021/2022 compared to 2018/2019 (pre-covid)

Every minute
of every day,
Tourism delivers
\$10,423 of domestic
visitor spend into
North Coast

Clarence Valley
accounts for **8%** of
total visitation, **7%** of total
visitor expenditure, and
6% of day trippers to the
North Coast region²

INTERNATIONAL VISITORS

International visitors measured
127,000 overnight stays, spent \$7m
and average spend per trip is \$438

Tourism Research Australia – Survey data 2022/23

VISITORS TO THE NORTH COAST REGION²

Percentage of total domestic North Coast (Northern Rivers and Mid-North Coast) visitors.
Based on the period of January 2022 to December 2022.

Clarence Valley

8% of total visitation

7% of total visitor
expenditure

6% of day trippers

Coffs Harbour

12% of total visitation

14% of total visitor
expenditure

12% of day trippers

Ballina

7% of total visitation

8% of total visitor
expenditure

8% of day trippers

Total North Coast domestic:



11.616M
Visitors (million)



21.178M
Overnights stays



\$5.479B
Expenditure

²Source: Tourism Research Australia, National Visitor Survey.

Target Markets and Visitor Profiles

The North Coast NSW destination management planning process identified nature-based and adventure travel and local food as strong experience themes for the region. These experience clusters offer significant opportunities to grow market share of day trip, domestic overnight and international visitors within the State, and attract new visitors to regional NSW. They are supported by a strong camping, caravanning and RV sector, sporting and events travel, and life-style health and well-being travellers.

Based off current visitation and aspirations for the future, the following experience themes have been identified as the most appropriate to target:

- Nature-based (land and water)
- Caravan and camping
- Food, drink and agri-tourism
- Business and leisure event
- Lifestyle, health and well-being
- Cultural tourism
- Heritage and arts

The aim is to attract high value travellers that are focused on immersive and experiential visitors and that respect the local culture and customs.

The following table shows the main North Coast target markets and their associated growth opportunities and key experiences.

TARGET MARKET	GROWTH OPPORTUNITIES	KEY EXPERIENCES
Day Visitors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ South East Queensland ▪ Newcastle and Hunter Region ▪ Within the North Coast ▪ Visiting Friends and Relatives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Nature-based ▪ Food, drink and agritourism ▪ Heritage and arts ▪ Aboriginal culture ▪ Authentic Leisure and business events ▪ Wellness
Domestic Overnight (short breaks)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Greater Sydney ▪ Interstate (Queensland, Victoria) ▪ Intra-region / regional NSW 	
International	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Extended stays and touring ▪ Visiting Friends and Relatives 	
Meetings, Incentives, Conference and Exhibitions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Intra-region ▪ Greater Sydney, Newcastle, Melbourne and South East Queensland ▪ Mid-week trade, with links to leisure trips/extensions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Incentive offerings related to food and wine, coast, arts, and culture

Table 4. North Coast NSW main target markets

A key factor in our success is maintaining our current market segments while also attracting new visitors who will thoroughly enjoy their experience in the Clarence Valley and become advocates for the region. Although there are numerous markets that may be drawn to the region's diverse offerings, it is essential to pinpoint and focus on those market segments most likely to visit the destination throughout the year.

Existing Markets - Enhancing the appeal of the destination to our current markets by:

- Prolonging the length of their stay
- Encouraging repeat visits
- Increasing engagement in tours and paid activities
- Promoting regional dispersal, particularly during peak seasons
- Holidaying in region – Locals exploring and spending within region

Emerging Markets - Concentrating on markets with significant potential to bolster the visitor economy:

- Increasing visitation during off-peak periods
- Enhancing overall yield by developing high-value experiences and accommodations

The top 3 categories of travellers visiting our region in 2022/23 were:

- Couples 27%
- Single travellers 27%
- Friends travelling together 24%

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Trends Influencing Visitor Demand

The following provides an overview of the main trends influencing recovery from the pandemic as sourced from travel research commissioned in 2022 that is also relevant to regional NSW visitor economy growth and development. It is recommended that continual monitoring of consumer trends be undertaken to 2030.

TREND	DESCRIPTION
Edventures / Mixing Work & Play	Is about combining education and holidays for the youngest members of the family. While adults may need to telework or attend meetings, their children can be doing workshops and learning in a playful way - workcations.
Transformative Travel Experiences	These are experiences that are less about just looking at things and more about experiencing something new that engages and connects visitors, in a meaningful way, to the place, its history and heritage and its people.
Conscious Travel	Travel to more distant destinations, but with prolonged durations of stay, as consumers look to enjoy as much of each place they visit as possible.
Green Travel	Climate change is a problem that is present and growing. Consumers now are much more responsible and aware of the reality they live in on a daily basis.
Rural Experiences	Rural and regional destinations in Australia will continue to benefit from the desire of source markets for city escapes that continue to boost domestic tourism.
New faces and places	2022 will finally be the time to branch out and make new connections with 55% wanting to meet new people while away. A resurgence of vacation romances is also likely, with 41% hoping for one on their next trip.
Travel as Self Care	Travel will become an essential form of self-care. Travellers agree that travel helps their mental and emotional wellbeing more than other forms of self-care.
Community First	Authentic connection with the local community will be a priority. Travellers agree it's important that their trip is beneficial to the local community at their destination.
Just Say Yes	People will be saying YES to travel, making up for lost vacation time with travellers now more open to different types of vacations.
Embracing the Unpredictable	People will use technology to embrace travels continued unpredictability with travellers agreeing that technology will be more important than ever while on vacation.

Source: See more at <https://www.unwto-tourismacademy.ie.edu/2021/08/tourism-trends-2022>, <https://skift.com/megatrends-2022/>, <https://skift.com/megatrends-2022/>

Positioning

The Clarence Valley - where nature, culture and communities thrive

Nestled between the rugged coast and fertile hinterland of northern New South Wales, the Clarence Valley offers a rare opportunity to genuinely reconnect with nature and community. Miles of unspoiled coastline featuring secluded beaches and headlands greet visitors alongside the meandering Clarence River, home to an abundance of native wildlife.

Within this protected natural landscape lie welcoming towns and villages that showcase the creativity and pride of the local people. Experience authentic coastal and riverfront living through local artisans, producers and friendly locals happy to share their home. Savor the freshest seafood and local flavors that nourish both body and spirit.

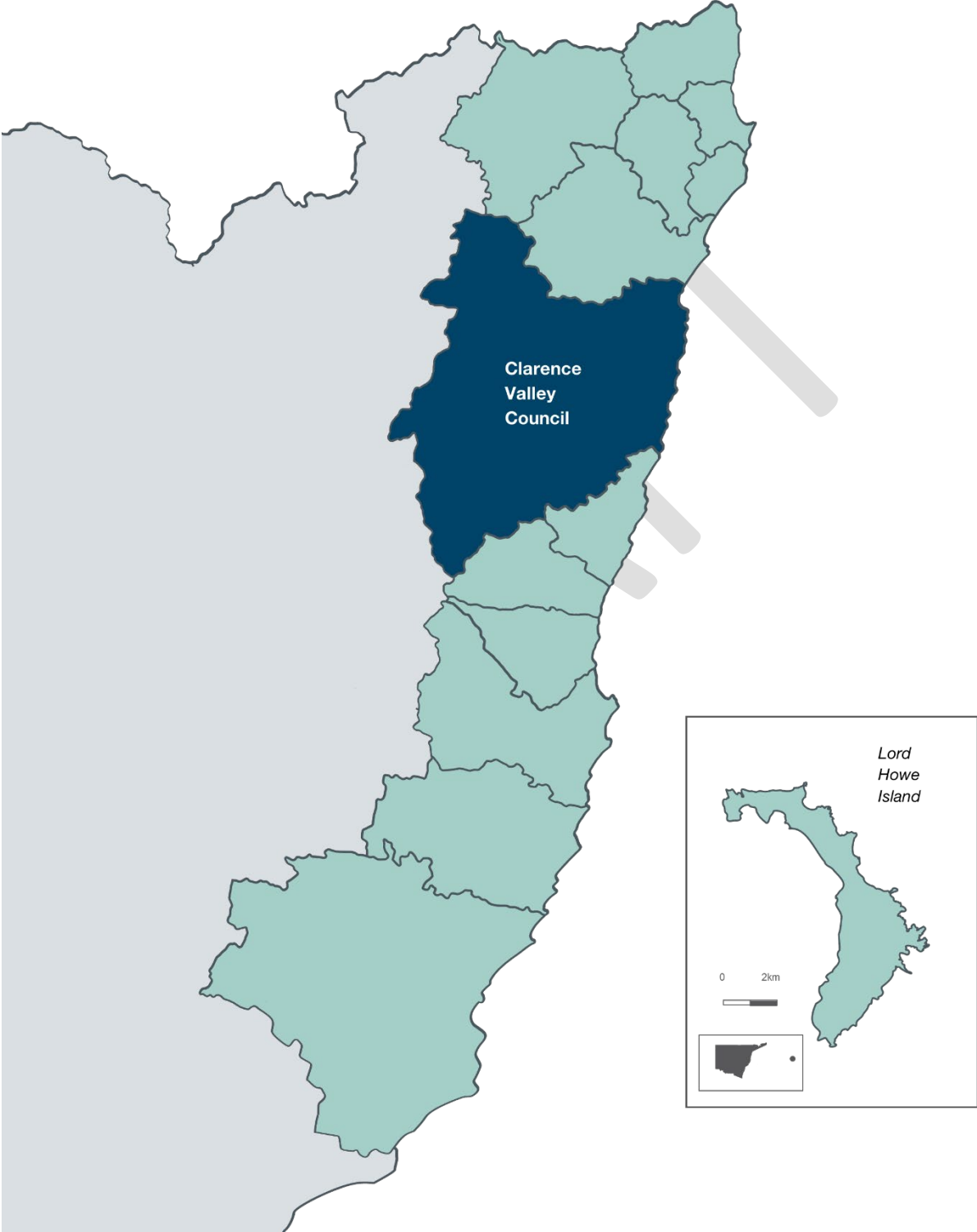
Whether enjoying laidback beaches and riverside trails, learning from our Traditional Owners' deep connection to Country, or immersing yourself in vibrant arts, heritage and local events, you'll discover why nature, culture and community thrive together here in the valley. Preserving its natural beauty for generations to come, the Clarence Valley invites all to slow down, reconnect and recharge in this special part of Australia.





The North Coast NSW region consists of 13 Local Government Areas and Lord Howe Island's Board of Management and spans the length of approximately 600km of coast and hinterland (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Map of the Destination North Coast NSW region.



Opportunities and Challenges

The following strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats were identified during the destination management planning process to inform the development of the Clarence Valley DMP.

Strengths

Abundant Natural Assets: The region boasts pristine beaches, meandering rivers like the Clarence River, expansive national parks, and lush forests, offering a myriad of activities such as fishing, hiking, kayaking and camping. This natural environment is the backbone of the region's appeal.

Rich Cultural Heritage: Opportunities abound to enhance immersive First Nations cultural experiences, showcasing local history and stories that resonate with visitors.

Vibrant Events & Festivals: The year-round calendar includes iconic events such as the renowned Jacaranda Festival, Yamba Rod-Run, and the Maclean Highland Gathering, creating draws for diverse audiences.

Growing Food & Drink Sector: The region enjoys a burgeoning food and drink scene, with the potential for further development in agritourism, showcasing local produce and farm gate experiences.

Strong Digital Presence: The My Clarence Valley brand boasts over 55,000 followers across Facebook and Instagram, indicating a robust social media presence that enhances visibility and engagement.

Recent Infrastructure Enhancements: Notable upgrades in certain towns, such as the Grafton Waterfront Precinct and Ulmarra Riverside Precinct, have improved amenities, enhancing visitor experiences.

Proximity to Larger Cities: The climate and strategic location near larger cities make it an appealing tourist destination, offering an escape into nature within reach of urban areas.

Well-Established Market of Visiting Friends & Relatives (VFR): A reliable market segment that contributes to consistent visitation and economic activity.

Connection with Northern Rivers Brand: This affiliation enhances the region's visibility and draws on the reputation of the larger Northern Rivers area.

Favoured Destination for Caravan & Camping Enthusiasts: Within New South Wales, the region is a favoured spot for those seeking caravan and camping adventures, contributing to a steady flow of visitors.

Diverse Nature-Based Attractions: From world-class surf beaches to tranquil rivers, serene National Parks, and State Forests, the region offers a wealth of natural wonders to explore.

Vibrant Communities: Each town and village within the Clarence Valley offers unique personalities and experiences, enriching the overall visitor journey.

Weaknesses

Seasonality of Visitation: The concentrated peak during summer holidays puts strain on resources and workforce availability, leading to challenges in managing demand.

Infrastructure Deficits: Issues such as congested road networks, limited parking, and constraints in medical facilities in coastal towns hinder the overall visitor experience.

Over-Reliance on Coastal Areas: The focus on major coastal centres leads to a lack of dispersal, missing out on opportunities to promote inland towns and attractions.

Accommodation Shortfalls: Challenges in availability and affordability of accommodations across the region impact both residents and seasonal workers.

Community Concerns: Local residents express concerns about the impacts of tourism, including traffic congestion, noise, environmental degradation, and shifts in local culture.

Transportation Challenges: Insufficient transportation options within the region limiting visitor mobility and exploration.

Limited Evening Activities: The scarcity of evening activities and constrained trading hours impact the potential for growth in the overnight visitor market.

Scarcity of Family-Friendly & Wet-Weather Attractions: Gaps in offerings for families and activities during inclement weather limit the region's appeal.

Challenges in Destination Linking: Difficulties in linking and packaging destinations, products, and experiences create barriers to seamless exploration.

Inadequate Signage & Wayfinding: Insufficient gateway and wayfinding signage pose challenges for visitors navigating the region.

Quality of Accommodations: Concerns over the consistency and quality of available accommodations affect the overall visitor experience.

Business Understanding of Visitor Economy: The need to enhance businesses' understanding of the visitor economy to maximize opportunities for growth.

Workforce Availability: Ensuring a skilled and adequate workforce to meet the demands of the tourism industry.

Insufficient Hinterland Products & Experiences: Gaps in offerings and experiences in the inland regions of the Clarence Valley.

Readiness for International Market: Ensuring that tourism products and services align with the expectations of international visitors.

Opportunities

Develop Eco-Tourism & Adventure Activities: There is a growing market for eco and adventure tourism, presenting opportunities to leverage the region's natural assets.

Enhance First Nations Experiences: Further develop engaging First Nations cultural experiences, showcasing Traditional Owner heritage and forming partnerships.

Utilize Clarence River: Enhance activities such as river cruises, paddle steamer tours, and new water-based adventures to capitalize on this iconic feature.

Expand Event Calendar: Introduce new flagship events and festivals throughout the year in various towns to extend visitor stays and attract diverse audiences such as business events.

Facilitate Agritourism Growth: Link food experiences with the growing agricultural sector, promoting farm gate visits and culinary tours.

Encourage Investment in Nature-Based Accommodation: Develop nature-based accommodations to cater to modern travel preferences and enhance the overall visitor experience.

Promote Inland Towns & Assets: Broaden the promotion and use of iconic inland towns and attractions to diversify visitor itineraries.

Develop Walking & Cycling Networks: Attract new visitor segments by developing comprehensive networks for outdoor enthusiasts.

Collaborative Itineraries: Work across destinations to create engaging and comprehensive itineraries, encouraging longer stays and increased spending.

Increase Visitor Yield: Convert day trippers into overnight visitors by offering compelling experiences and packages.

Support Private Sector Innovation: Encourage private sector investment in developing innovative tourism products and experiences.

Promote Accessibility: Develop and promote accessible tourism offerings to cater to a broader range of visitors.

Threats

Over-tourism Risks: There is a risk of overdevelopment leading to the loss of natural assets and the unique local character of the region.

Climate Change Vulnerability: Natural areas and towns are vulnerable to climate change impacts such as storms and fires, affecting tourism operations.

Community Displacement: Concerns of loss of local culture and community due to displacement by short-term rental trends like AirBNBs.

Infrastructure Lag: The risk of becoming congested like overdeveloped destinations if infrastructure upgrades do not keep pace with visitor growth.

Community Opposition: Continued opposition from locals could hamper future tourism growth and development efforts.

Complacency & Innovation: Risks of complacency hindering innovation and progress, limiting the region's competitiveness.

Resource & Labour Constraints: Limited availability of skilled labour poses challenges in meeting the demands of a growing tourism industry.

Development Approval Challenges: Lengthy approval times for development applications delaying progress in tourism projects.

Policy Framework Limitations: Challenges posed by the NSW planning framework, which may not be conducive to the growth of the visitor economy.

Quality Assurance: Concerns over the quality of businesses and infrastructure, particularly in small businesses, impacting visitor satisfaction.

Environmental Degradation: Risks of environmental damage from overuse of natural areas, such as beaches, affecting the region's appeal.

Limited Transportation Options: Insufficient transportation options within the region limiting visitor mobility and exploration.

Housing Affordability: Challenges in addressing affordable housing for both residents and visitors, impacting workforce availability.

Hinterland Development: The need to enhance offerings and experiences in the inland regions of the Clarence Valley to diversify attractions.

International Market Readiness: Ensuring that tourism products and services are tailored to meet the expectations and preferences of international visitors.

Business Understanding: The necessity to enhance businesses' understanding of the visitor economy and market trends for sustainable growth.

Evening Activity Shortfalls: The scarcity of evening activities and constrained trading hours limiting the potential for growth in the overnight visitor market.

Signage & Navigation Challenges: Inadequate gateway and wayfinding signage posing challenges for visitors navigating the region seamlessly.

Community and Stakeholder Engagement

Community Engagement included;

- Online Survey was opened from the 15th of December 2023 through the 31st of January 2024. 255 Online responses + 10 Paper submissions
- Community Drop-In Sessions were hosted at the Grafton Regional Gallery and Yamba River Markets. 30+ residents and visitors attended and completed the survey.
- Meeting with Yaegl Elders (further First Nation Consultation to be undertaken during the exhibition period.)

Who we spoke to:

Business Stakeholders

- Grafton Chamber of Commerce
- Yamba Chamber of Commerce
- Iluka Chamber of Commerce
- Maclean Chamber of Commerce

CVC Advisory Committees

- CVC Biodiversity Advisory Committee
- CVC Economic Development and Tourism Advisory Committee

Regional Stakeholders

- Destination North Coast
- Neighbouring Councils

Yaegl Elders and CVC Internal Stakeholders

Community Engagement Snapshot

Community engagement has identified the following priorities for consideration:

- Sustainability
- Inclusivity and Accessibility
- Cultural Preservation
- Community Engagement
- Outdoor Recreation
- Arts and Culture
- Infrastructure Development

What did they say?

(Key Stats from Online Survey)

88% believe tourism benefits the Clarence Valley's jobs and economy.

87% believe tourism is good for the Clarence Valley region overall.

84% believe tourism brings opportunity to attract new business and events.

76% believe tourism is good for the local community where I live.

77% believe tourism helps attract new residents.

34% believe tourism makes it hard for locals to enjoy our attractions.

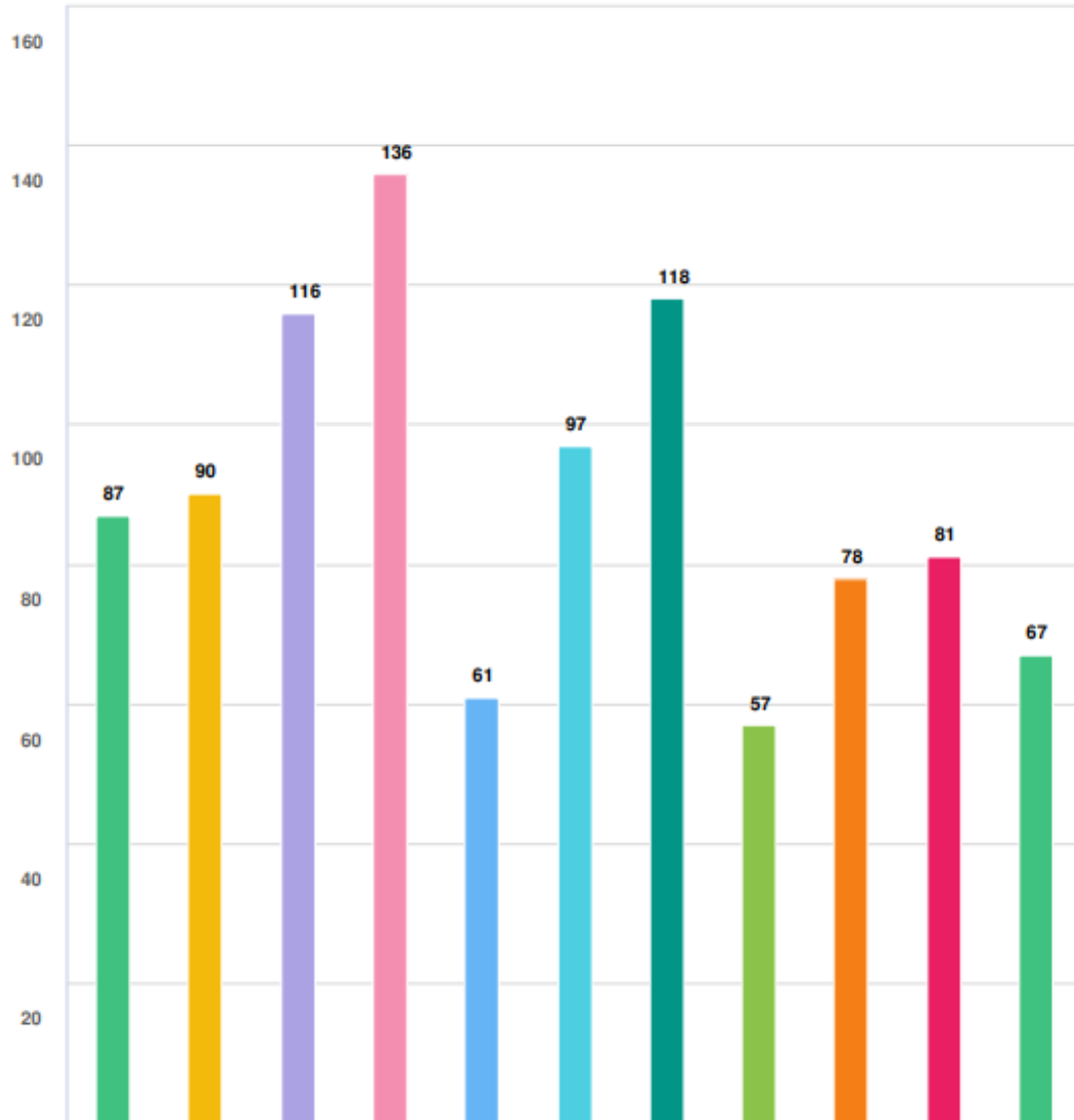
36% believe tourism has a negative impact on the Clarence Valley's natural resources.

42% believe tourism causes damage to the Clarence Valley's environment.

64% believe visitor traffic negatively effects travel on our main roads and in our community.

Key online survey questions

Question 5: What are the major challenges to increasing visitation in the Clarence Valley?



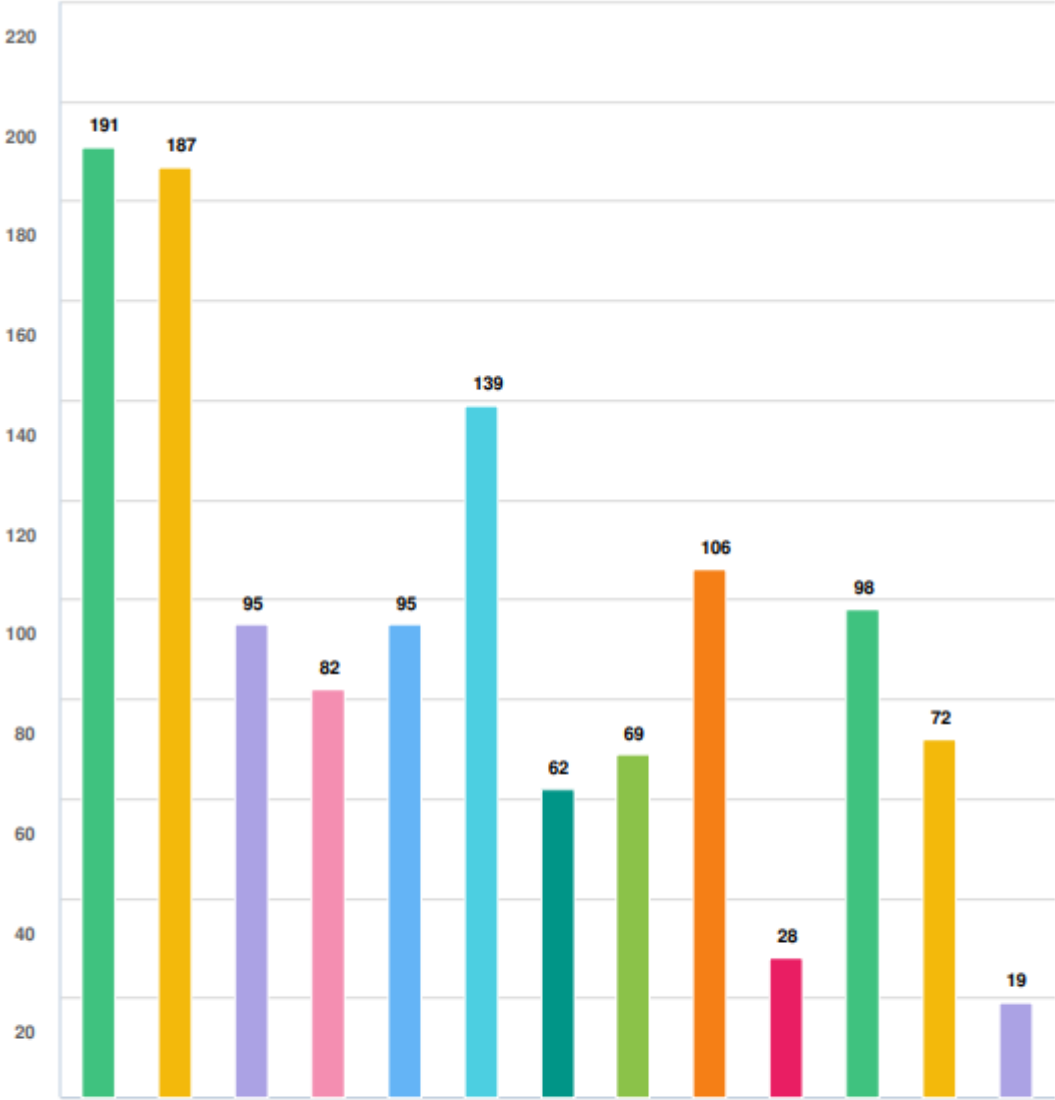
Question options

- Other (please specify)
- Finances / funding
- External destination marketing, media, and PR
- Dispersal of visitors across the Clarence Valley LGA
- Community traumas / fatigue / moral
- State of some current attractions and services
- Transport
- Accommodation
- Human resourcing / skilled labour
- Limited visitor experience and services
- Destination profile / perception in visitors minds

Mandatory Question (266 response(s))

Question type: Checkbox Question

Question 6: Which of the following activities and experiences (if they are or were available) in the Clarence Valley region appeal to you as a local? (Select your top 5.)

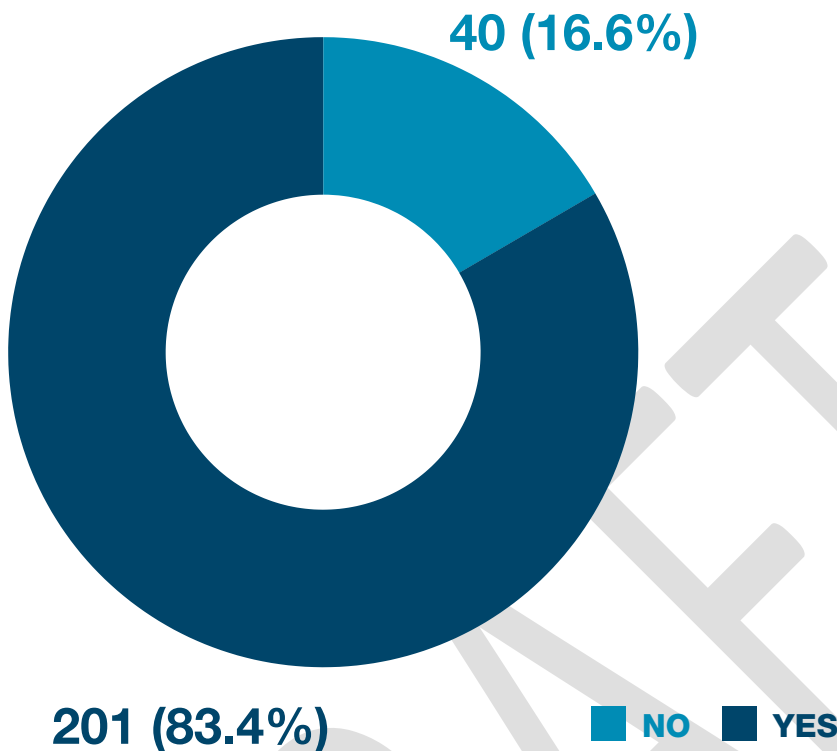


Question options

- Other (please specify) Family Friendly Activities Hiking and Biking Photography Events and Festivals
- Wildlife Encounters Shopping / Antiquing / Markets Restaurants / Pubs / Clubs Indigenous Experiences
- Art Galleries and Art Trails Museums / Heritage Sites and Walks National Parks
- River Activities (ie. fishing, boating, kayaking, etc.)

Optional question (265 response(s), 1 skipped)
 Question type: Checkbox Question

Question 10: Would you like Clarence Valley to be an eco-credited destination, promoting eco-friendly operations?



*Mandatory Question (241 response(s))
Question type: Dropdown Question*

83.4% of respondents would like to see the
Clarence Valley be an eco-credited destination.

What is ECO Destination Certification?

The ECO Destination Certification program assures travellers that certified destinations are backed by a strong, well-managed commitment to ongoing improvement of sustainable practices and provide high-quality nature-based tourism experiences within the region.



Summary of the key findings

- The majority of respondents agreed that tourism is beneficial for the Clarence Valley region overall, including local communities, the economy, and quality of life. However, there was less agreement that it directly benefits individuals or helps preserve culture.
- The main challenges to increasing visitation identified were related to infrastructure and facilities, dispersing visitors across the region, marketing and perception, and community impacts such as fatigue or moral issues.
- Nature-based experiences like parks, beaches, camping, food, and events were seen as the most important attractions. Cultural and heritage tourism and wellness or lifestyle activities were considered somewhat less important.
- There was some disagreement about whether tourism makes enjoying attractions difficult, negatively impacts resources, or causes environmental damage. Opinions on traffic impacts were mixed.
- Accommodation, aquatic facilities, river and beach activities, and markets or shopping emerged as the top attractions to promote externally. Historic sites and museums, fishing, and national parks were also commonly suggested.
- Improving roads, parking, attractions and services, and marketing were common project ideas. River and water activities also emerged along with First Nations tourism, accommodation, and trails or pathways.
- Most respondents supported an eco-credentialed approach, although some questioned its effectiveness or felt that other priorities were more important.
- Views on the future of tourism leaned toward sustainability, maintaining the region's natural attributes, spreading visitors across towns, and improving infrastructure and capacity before large-scale growth. Respondents commonly referenced the challenges faced by Byron Bay as something to avoid.
- The feedback from the community underscores a shared passion for the Clarence Valley's unique environment, culture, and potential for sustainable tourism growth. By addressing the priority themes and concerns highlighted, the CV DMP aims to create a balanced and thriving tourism ecosystem that benefits residents, visitors, and the region as a whole. Through collaboration, innovation, and responsible stewardship, the Clarence Valley can continue to be a destination of choice for generations to come.

General Themes

General themes of feedback nature-based attractions like the Clarence River and national parks, cultural experiences such as First Nations centers and festivals, outdoor activities like mountain biking and kayaking, infrastructure upgrades for camping and hiking, support for local talent and events, as well as promotion and information dissemination through better signage and marketing campaigns.

Specific suggestions for enhancing tourism include developing mountain biking trails, river activities like cruises and water parks, cultural centers for First Nations arts, food and drink trails, arts and entertainment events, infrastructure improvements like better roads and facilities, educational experiences with wildlife tours and heritage trails, hospitality and accommodation expansion, and a focus on sustainable tourism practices.

Unique ideas for tourism development in the region include promoting the Glenreagh Rail Trail, offering adventure courses like zip lines and rock climbing, developing riverfront areas with cafes and scenic viewpoints, providing wellness retreats for health-focused tourism, promoting First Nations tourism through tours and workshops, organizing special events like Christmas celebrations and music concerts, and increasing education and awareness with information centers and guided tours.

Some concerns and alternative views expressed by residents include worries about overcrowding, environmental impact, and maintaining the region's natural beauty. Suggestions for addressing these concerns include promoting responsible tourism practices, preserving solitude, and avoiding over-commercialization of the area.

Our 2030 Vision

Based on Online Survey Results

By 2030, the Clarence Valley will have established itself as a premier nature-based tourism destination in northern NSW, known for its protected coastal and river landscapes, First Nations cultural experiences, and vibrant local communities.

Tourism will continue to boost the local economy through new businesses and jobs, especially in the food/beverage, arts, and outdoor recreation sectors. Visitation will be carefully managed to protect the environment and disperse tourists throughout the whole valley via improved wayfinding and regional connections between towns.

The unique character of each town will remain intact as locals shape new development. Accommodation options strategically located away from peaks will support job growth year-round. Infrastructure like roads, trails and Wi-Fi hotspots will enhance the visitor experience without compromising tranquillity or Internet access for residents.

Collaboration with First Nations partners will showcase cultural heritage throughout the area. River activation with activities like kayaking or houseboating will occur sustainably. Major festivals drawing interstate and international travelers will celebrate local identity.

Eco-accreditation will attract conscious travellers and bolster environmental protection as 'green' businesses adopt sustainable practices. Above all, tourism will occur respectfully so residents can continue enjoying this stunning region for generations to come.

Strategic Objectives

Five strategic objectives are designed to coordinate, facilitate, and grow the Clarence Valley visitor economy into the future aligning with both the Destination North Coast DMP and NSW Visitor Economy Strategy 2030 (NSW VES) strategic pillars.

- 1. Road to Recovery**
- 2. Build the Brand**
- 3. Showcase Our Strengths**
- 4. Invest in Major Events**
- 5. Facilitate Growth**

NSW VES Strategic Pillars	1. Road to Recovery	2. Build the Brand	3. Showcase Our Strengths	4. Invest in Major Events	5. Facilitate Growth
Clarence Valley Council DMP Strategic Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support visitor economy businesses to strengthen product offerings and disperse visitors throughout the Clarence Valley. Provide leadership and advocacy to coordinate & represent the needs of the Clarence Valley economy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build community pride and awareness of the visitor economy's benefits across the Clarence Valley. Strengthen partnerships between neighbouring LGAs, leveraging the Northern Rivers brand. Implement a marketing and promotions strategy to raise external profile and ensure messaging aligns with strengths Increase the quantity of Clarence Valley visitor economy products promoted. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leverage natural assets to facilitate growth of eco-tourism and adventure businesses showcasing the region's outdoor activities and landscapes. Develop arts, cultural, and First Nations experiences celebrating local heritage. Grow signature food/drink and agritourism through partnerships between producers, experiences developers, and accommodation providers. Focus on increasing average length of stay & yield. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthen existing events and develop new signature festivals extending seasonality and visitor dispersal across low/shoulder periods. Position Clarence Valley as the premier participative sporting event host in regional NSW. Encourage and support events that increase visitation across low and shoulder season. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support sustainable practices, infrastructure upgrades, innovative business models and ensure planning facilitates growth while protecting natural assets. Advocate for improved transport access and links to leverage proximity to major centres while dispersing visitors across the region. Support the development of accessible tourism product and experiences. Attract accommodation investment to support growing visitor
Desired Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Return visitation levels back to those experienced in 2018/19. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved community and visitor sentiment of Clarence Valley tourism and events. Increased destination recognition and promotion. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased number of visitor experiences. Increased length of stay and overnight visitation expenditure. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased economic impact and overnight visitor expenditure generated by major events. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 10% increase in ATDW registered Visitor Economy Businesses by 2030. Increased private and public sector investment for visitor infrastructure.

Action Plan and Monitoring

The following actions relate to the five Clarence Valley DMP strategic objectives.

Actions align with the three phases of the NSW Visitor Economy Strategy 2030 and Destination North Coast DMP 2030.



Monitoring

The Action Plan will be monitored biannually and reviewed annually. Achieving the vision and growing the visitor economy will require significant collaboration with visitor economy businesses, the public and private sector, local, state, and national tourism bodies, land managers, agencies, and our community.

Abbreviations

BNSW – Business NSW

COC – Chambers of Commerce

DNC – Destination North Coast

DNSW – Destination New South Wales

HCB – Hinterland Cluster Businesses

LOLC – Local Aboriginal Land Councils

NPWS - National Parks and Wildlife Services

RM II – Riverway Masterplan II

SNSW – Service NSW

TA – Tourism Australia

1. Road to Recovery

Strategic Objectives:

- **Support visitor economy businesses to strengthen product offerings and disperse visitors throughout the Clarence Valley.**
- **Provide leadership and advocacy to coordinate & represent the needs of the Clarence Valley economy.**

The following actions focus on building industry sustainability, capability and resilience to best support recovery to return visitation and expenditure to pre-COVID levels by 2025.

ACTIONS		LEAD	PROGRAM PARTNERS & LINKAGES	TIMEFRAME
1.1	Develop and deliver a program of business support and industry development comprising grants and funding, business planning, training and other tools to assist businesses to recover, be resilient and sustainable, improve digital capability and encourage investment in new product and experience design.	CVC	SNSW BNSW DNC BNSW COC CV REDS	2024-2030
1.2	Provide information, advice and support (e.g. Grant Guru, Profileid) for operators seeking grant funding for tourism and event projects.	CVC	CV REDS RM II	2024-2030
1.3	Refresh business.myclarencevalley.com assets to deliver a better user experience and increase resources offered to businesses.	CVC	RM II	2024-2030
1.4	Expand Visitor Information Servicing to increase access, distribution, and education of visitor information in key visitor centres.	CVC	Local Industry DNC	2024-2030

2. Build the Brand

Strategic Objectives:

- **Build community pride and awareness of the visitor economy’s benefits across the Clarence Valley.**
- **Strengthen partnerships between neighbouring LGAs, leveraging the Northern Rivers brand.**
- **Implement a marketing and promotions strategy to raise external profile and ensure messaging aligns with strengths**
- **Increase the quantity of Clarence Valley visitor economy products promoted.**

The following actions focus on identifying and communicating marketing campaigns to attract new and returning visitors to the Clarence Valley and expand the destination profile.

ACTION		LEAD	PROGRAM PARTNERS & LINKAGES	TIMEFRAME
2.1	Develop and distribute bi-annual Clarence Valley Visitor Guide.	CVC	Local Industry DNC	2024-2030
2.2	Increase tourism brand profile through marketing and media strategies that are aligned with our key target markets.	CVC	Local Industry DNC	2024-2030
2.3	Ongoing refresh of My Clarence Valley website and collateral.	CVC	RM II	2024-2030
2.4	Conduct marketing campaigns annually, with a particular focus on our experience pillars.	CVC	RM II DNC	2024-2030
2.5	Leverage the region’s ‘My Clarence Valley’ brand to develop and expand businesses based in riverside precincts in the region.	CVC	CV REDS	2024-2030
2.7	Facilitate opportunities for strengthening cultural tourism in partnership with Traditional Owners and First Nations People.	CVC	RM II	2024-2030
2.8	Develop a ‘brand resource library’ for Clarence Valley tourism operators and engage with local businesses and other tourism industry stakeholders to use the My Clarence Valley branding in their own marketing.	CVC	RM II	2025-2030

3. Showcase Our Strengths

Strategic Objectives:

- Leverage natural assets to facilitate growth of eco-tourism and adventure businesses showcasing the region's outdoor activities and landscapes.
- Develop arts, cultural, and First Nations experiences celebrating local heritage.
- Grow signature food/drink and agritourism through partnerships between producers, experiences developers, and accommodation providers.
- Focus on increasing average length of stay and yield.

The following actions focus on supporting and developing visitor experiences focused on the key strengths of the Clarence Valley destination.

ACTIONS		LEAD	PROGRAM PARTNERS & LINKAGES	TIMEFRAME
3.1	Position the Clarence Valley as an accredited Eco Certified Destination identifying our region as a nature-based tourism destination with an in-depth demonstration of commitment to ecotourism principles across all aspects of the tourism industry and community.	CVC	RM II Visitor economy businesses.	2024-2028
3.2	Work with regional and local tourism entities to establish an efficient and coordinated marketing approach	CVC	RM II DNC Neighbouring Councils	2024-2030
3.3	Work with National Parks and Wildlife Services for the investment in visitor facilities, signage, and promotion of key assets and experiences such as the Yuraygir Coastal Walk.	CVC NPWS	RM II NPWS DNC	2024-2030
3.4	Curate digital itineraries to connect visitors, tour operators, and coach companies with up-to-date information on key events and visitor attractions	CVC	RM II NPWS DNC	2025-2030
3.5	Promote the Clarence as one of the Nations Great River experiences	CVC	RM II DNC HCB CV REDS	2024-2030
3.6	Encourage visitor economy businesses to increase conversion and distribution of products and experiences online, making it easier for visitors to find and book them.	CVC	Visitor Economy Businesses DNC	2024-2030
3.7	Investigate opportunity for an International Dark Sky Park	CVC	DNC, DNSW	2025-2030

4. Invest in Events

Strategic Objectives:

- **Strengthen existing events and develop new signature festivals extending seasonality and visitor dispersal across low/shoulder periods.**
- **Position Clarence Valley as the premier participative sporting event host in regional NSW.**
- **Encourage and support events that increase visitation across low and shoulder season.**

The following actions focus on supporting event organisers to improve event coordination and capacity to attract new markets, achieve increased overnight visitor expenditure and increase our destination profile to further support the visitor economy.

ACTIONS		LEAD	PROGRAM PARTNERS & LINKAGES	TIMEFRAME
4.1	Develop and deliver a Clarence Valley Events toolkit to provide a clear framework for CVC assistance to event organisers.	CVC	DNC DMP	2024-2030
4.2	Invest in major events that deliver significant economic outcomes.	CVC	DNC DMP Riverway Masterplan II CV REDS Event sponsorship policy	2024-2030
4.3	Market events through My Clarence Valley Brand to increase visibility and attract new visitors	CVC	Riverway Masterplan II DNC DMP	2024-2030
4.4	Deliver an industry development program to build organiser capacity in planning and running events especially in the Clarence Valley	CVC	Destination Networks Department of Regional NSW	2025-2030
4.4	Support event venues to attract new markets such as business events.	CVC	DNC Business NSW	2024-2030
4.5	Create vibrant places and drive visitation by activating government-owned assets such as community precincts, cultural institutions, parks and public spaces with compelling new event content and placemaking initiatives.	CVC	DPI, RNSW Department of Regional NSW	2024-2030
4.6	Investigate opportunities to establish or attract a festival that celebrates the Clarence River.	CVC Comm unity	Riverway Masterplan II DNC DMP CV REDS	2025-2030
4.7	Support the attraction and continued development of participatory sporting events and advocate for regional hosting of training camps and sporting events including for the 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games	CVC	DNC, DNSW	2024-2030

5. Facilitate Sustainable Growth

Strategic Objectives:

- Support sustainable practices, infrastructure upgrades, innovative business models and ensure planning facilitates growth while protecting natural assets.
- Advocate for improved transport access and links to leverage proximity to major centres while dispersing visitors across the region.
- Support the development of accessible tourism product and experiences.

The following actions focuses on positioning the Clarence Valley as an attractive region for investment and supporting private sector to enhance or develop new products and experiences.

ACTIONS		LEAD	PROGRAM PARTNERS & LINKAGES	TIMEFRAME
5.1	Development and promotion of Clarence Valley Investment Prospectus to support the attraction of new businesses.	CVC	CVC Employment Land Strategy	2024-2030
5.1	Review/assess internal cross-departmental requirements and State/Federal agencies to encourage/facilitate/reduce red tape for new tourism businesses and experiences to be developed in the Clarence Valley.	CVC	CVC NSW	2024-2030
5.2	Advocate and support investment in major projects with potential to grow Clarence Valley's visitor economy related to the regions' positioning strengths.	CVC	Riverway Masterplan	2024-2030
5.3	Facilitate partnerships with local First Nations organisations to develop new tourism offerings.	CVC	CV REDS LOLC	2024-2030
5.4	Investigate new industrial uses of the region's marine precincts and conduct a feasibility study into the infrastructure and dredging processes required to support the precinct activation.	CVC	CV REDS	2026-2030
5.5	Support the reinstating of Grafton as a regional city.	CVC	CVC Employment Land Strategy	2024-2030
5.6	Develop and promote accessible tourism products, experiences, and visitor precincts.	CVC	CVC DIAP	2024-2030
5.7	Ensure that visitor economy infrastructure needs are reflected in strategic land use plans and regional plans, for example, to ensure accommodation supply meets future market demand.	CVC	DNSW Destination Networks TNSW	2024-2030

