



MEDIA RELEASE

FINAL REPORT: TOURISM IN LOCAL COMMUNITIES

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

6 March 2014

The General Purpose Standing Committee No 3 has made a number of recommendations aimed at fostering and growing tourism in New South Wales in its final report for the Inquiry into tourism in local communities released today.

Recently the tourism sector has undergone significant reform to secure future growth and ensure that tourism in New South Wales is operating at a world class standard. These reforms have changed the way that government funding for regional tourism is delivered and have created a new strategic platform for the growth of tourism and visitation in regional New South Wales, to achieve the State's goals of doubling overnight visitor expenditure by 2020.

"Tourism plays a vital role in our State's economy, with a direct value of \$30.5 billion, representing a 30 per cent share of the national level, said Committee Chair, the Hon Natasha Maclaren-Jones MLC.

"This Inquiry has given stakeholders the opportunity to provide feedback on how they are adapting to the reforms." The reforms included the introduction of destination management plans, changes to funding for regional tourism organisations and the implementation of the new Regional Visitor Economy Fund.

The Committee recommended a review of the destination management planning system and Regional Visitor Economy Fund in five years' time to assess the effectiveness of the reforms.

"We appreciate that the destination management planning system was only introduced in 2013 and that implementing a new system is challenging and can reveal issues which may not have been anticipated," said Mrs Maclaren-Jones. "In addition to the five year review, the Committee has made a number of immediate recommendations to address stakeholder concerns regarding eligibility and assessment criteria of the Regional Visitor Economy Fund."

A key issue for local communities was the relationship between tourism and infrastructure. The report recognises the impact of increased visitation on tourism and community infrastructure (such as public toilets, sewerage and parks), and the need for adequate transport infrastructure to support increased visitation to New South Wales. The report also considers different options available for infrastructure funding, including special rate variations. Mrs Maclaren-Jones said, "Special rate

variations can be a valuable and effective source of additional income to fund tourism initiatives that can be of mutual benefit to local communities and visitors.”

“This report also identifies development opportunities for tourism and visitor growth in New South Wales, including the existing and potential contribution of national parks to the visitor economy,” said Mrs Maclaren-Jones. “To maximise the visitor potential of national parks we need to improve access to them. The Committee has recommended the NSW Government investigate further opportunities for tourism in national parks including accommodation, campaign, mountain bike trails and fossicking.”

“In addition, the Committee acknowledges the benefits of rail trails to local communities and has recommended the NSW Government allow disused rail corridors to be developed into rail trails.”

“This report recognises the value of tourism to local communities and the New South Wales economy. Taken together, our recommendations build on the reforms introduced by the NSW Government and promote opportunities to further improve and grow the vital visitor economy of New South Wales,” said Mrs Maclaren-Jones.

A full copy of the Committee’s recommendations and the executive summary are attached. The report is on the Committee’s website at www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/gpsc3. Hard copies are available on request.

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*For further comment please contact the Hon Natasha Maclaren-Jones MLC
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