

## **INQUIRY INTO TOURISM IN LOCAL COMMUNITIES**

**Organisation:** Temora Shire Council

**Date received:** 28/06/2013

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**1. Opening remarks - Background**

- a. Submission on behalf of Temora Shire Council – Author Andrew Robbins Manager Community and Commercial Strategies
- b. Tourism covers several areas of human activity. These include the activities of traveling for pleasure<sup>1</sup>, the business of arranging travel and travel services for people and Travel to benefit from a particular service or activity that is unavailable at home (*usually used in combination*) such as health Tourism.
- c. These days we often use the terms of *Visitation* rather than *Tourism*, as visitation implies a more personal involvement in the experiences had from traveling to a place which is not where you live.
- d. In the late 1980's the NSW State Government of the day, though the Department of Tourism, defined a "Tourist" as: *one who travels more than 35 kilometres and stays the night in a bed which is not his or her own.* As much as this was rarely quoted without mirth, it did at least endeavour to clarify what the industry had to do to receive assistance based on a standard definition.
- e. Over the past 50 years I have been involved in tourism as an operator, an owner and as a client tourist. Firstly I experienced travel as a Naval Officer for work. Then later as a civilian we travelled for pleasure and at the same time we had the ownership and operation of three separate tourist attractions for over 30 years. In in the late 1980's and early 1990s also had the privilege of being the Chairman of Tourism in Dubbo for several years and worked with Dr. Ian Denny and the Dubbo City Council to increase tourism to our area.
- f. My current position is with the Temora Shire Council and Manage Tourism Strategies within my portfolio.

**2. Destination Planning**

- a. The current move to Destination Planning and reconfiguration of the Regional Tourism bodies as well as a proposed redefinition in the actual regional areas, is one which will no doubt take some time to mature as a working model for both industry and the LGA's affected.
- b. There has been some bewilderment on the part of tourism operators and local government tourism teams as to the intent of the Department in the long run. I personally have seen so many rearrangements of policy, funding, reporting and partnerships over the years, that I am not concerned about the long term outcomes, somehow we will make it work at the local level.
- c. However, in making that statement, I do feel there has been a under estimation of the complexity and maturity of existing partnerships which industry and LGA's have across the State. There a number of projects which are Government funded or assisted across our State, which help drive the Visitor Economy.
- d. In the Riverina these include the award-winning Junee Liquorice Factory and the Temora Aviation Museum. We also are home to the Australian Jet Boat

fraternity at Lake Centenary and at the Temora Airport we also host Australian and State titles in several powered aircraft and gliding classes.

- e. There are also many and varied *trails* and *routes* which are based on activities which include: food, bird-watching, Military history and monuments, Art, history (such as Gold and Historic buildings and Food and Wine ,experience and which already are in place or about to be launched.
- f. In the smaller populated Shires, it is imperative that their distinctive characters are recognised and celebrated. In Europe and other areas with higher populations and with longer “*civilised*” histories, they fiercely guard and nurture the individuality and culture of their regions or towns.
- g. What I am fearful of, is that the current trend in policy does not focus on such regionalism as in Europe and elsewhere; which is based upon communities of interest; nor has strategies to grow the potential of *trails* and shared potential *partnerships*, between areas and communities which have common interests or offerings.
- h. In summary I support the need for appropriate Destination Planning which can be a positive step in planning visitor strategies. However, apart from VFR and Business markets, the idea that many small communities or Shires (or even many LGAs) are now, or will ever be *Destinations* is implausible.
- i. The exceptions from this will be in areas with commonality and identifiable product(s). These include Coastal areas, Snowfields, water-rich areas (coast, dams, rivers and lakes) and others, which may well be seen as destinations, as they have the single-product focus which works as an attraction identifier.
- j. Local Government Areas working together may also be able to work together in areas where there is a common attraction. Patently this works in cases such as the Snowy Mountains and the Murray and no doubt in others.
- k. However, the main attractors which exist as *Visitation* drivers in our wider area and certainly in Temora, are VFR (Visiting Friends and Relative) and those who visit for Business related reasons. Combined this is approximately 65% - 68% of visitor numbers.

### 3. The even playing field

- a. The question we will be asking is what support will we have in marketing the virtues of our LGA's, when most of our visitors “fly under the RADAR”, undetectable, as they mostly stay with friends and relatives. In addition, regarding business visitors, there is usually little of no pattern of visitation and little time for them to get to know the area, the region or LGA.
- b. The names which try and “tag” market sectors change from year to year. The Grey Nomads, Empty Nesters, Wanderers and others will keep doing what they always do. Over the nearly 40 years past, all I have seen are bigger vans and better roads... these visitors sectors are constant, but in terms of dollar spend not they are that strong on spending anything but for the necessities
- c. Those with the new vans and bigger vehicles, now want to pay little or nothing to camp in our Shires. Yet they happily use our free amenities and parks, avail themselves of free parking, dog leash areas, lakes and sporting fields and leave. There are exceptions to this widely held view, but the general

observation is that numbers of Wanderers and Grey Nomads are up, but their dollar spend is not keeping pace inflation nor with the percentage rise in the value of their rigs.

**What do we have to offer which fits the NSW Tourism Strategies?**

4.
  - a. The attached list “A Snapshot of Temora 2013” shows the depth of our community assets and the tourism/visitation products and opportunities we have in our Shire and the surrounding communities.
  - b. We have to lever off the strengths and build Destination Plans upon:
    - i. Our VFR and Business visitation markets
    - ii. The trails and tourist routes which we co-market
    - iii. Agricultural tourism - centred on the 100 year old Temora Agricultural Innovation, which brings thousands of visitors here each year.
    - iv. Expand our Aviation events
    - v. Value add to our airport estate and facilities with a multi-purpose building for events, conferences and training
    - vi. Continue to support our World standard Temora aviation Museum
    - vii. Expand our water sports and triathlon sectors
    - viii. Grow the market for extreme sports such as Jet Boats, Sky-diving and supercar time trials.

**5. Destination Marketing – Unique selling Points**

- a. Indications from NSW Tourism appear to demand that all applicants for funding will have to “differentiate themselves in the market”, in their Destination marketing Plan before they will be funded.
- b. This may well be a great academic strategy, but when it comes to a draft an overall marketing strategy there is little room to differentiate.
- c. The suite of events and genres of product in sect 4 above, do not differentiate Temora Shire in the wider market. All that of which we are passionate can and is replicated in other areas.  
Further, many of which are replicated and even surpassed, at locations much nearer to the main populations of the Coastal areas near Sydney Wollongong and Melbourne.
- d. In closing it behoves me to draw attention to the stated need for *market differentiation for all applications* for Destination Plans. In the end, small populations have only so much to spend on attractions. To be honest we have, for much of the year, a hot and dry climate, with not a lot of water with which to have fun.

This means that for much of the year we are not attractive to the people on the coast where water is abundant.

- e. Therefore, I find it hard to envisage much differentiation between one sun-soaked, blue watered, sandy, tree-lines, sun-soaked bather filled beach...from any other of the hundred or so along the NSW Coast. I will watch with anticipation the arguments tendered in there various DMPs regarding why they are differentiated in the market.

6. The Legislative Council Committee 3 may wish to know that a credible 12 month statistical sample group of 9,747 customer transactions has been completed today 28 June 2013. Postcodes were recorded for all the sample and showed that in excess of 37% were visitors to Temora.
7. The sample included post codes from all States and Territories of Australia. This indicated strongly the value of Visitation to our Shire's businesses and our overall economy.
8. This report has been compiled in the hope our information will be of assistance to the Committee. Temora Shire Council wishes the committee well in its deliberations and a representative will be available to answer questions from the Committee.

28 June 2013

Temora Shire Reference Number D/01/04

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<sup>i</sup> Encarta: Dictionary English (U.K.)