

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

**Organisation:** Coonamble Shire Council

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Our Ref: RW:LP/LT

Your Ref: T3



26/06/2013

The Director  
General Purpose Standing Committee No. 3, Legislative Council  
Parliament House  
Macquarie Street  
Sydney NSW 2000

To the Director,

RE: Inquiry into tourism in local communities

Coonamble Shire Council recognises tourism as an important sector of the local economy and a contributor to the sustainability and vibrancy of our local community.

Although Coonamble Shire is not considered a traditional holiday destination, the local tourism industry is worth an estimated annual \$2.94 million to the local economy (Domestic and International Visitor Expenditure Destination NSW LGA Profile 2012). Coonamble and Gulargambone benefit from visitors travelling to Lightning Ridge or to North QLD on the Great Inland Way touring route. Coonamble Shire receives an estimated 27,840 annual overnight domestic visitors and 250 overnight international visitors.

Coonamble Shire Council is a financial member of Inland NSW Tourism, the Great Inland Way Committee (an inter-state tourism promotions committee) and the Warrumbungle Region Tourism Cluster (with Narrabri, Gilgandra and Warrumbungle LGAs). Council employs a dedicated Tourism Development Manager and Grants and Events Officer to help support local tourism product development and event growth.

Two areas of concern for Coonamble Shire relate to tourism growth opportunities and supporting and growing our local events.

### Tourism growth through access to natural attractions

Natural attractions such as the Pilliga State Forest, the Warrumbungle National Park, the Macquarie Marshes Nature Reserve and private Ramsar Wetlands are key tourism assets within, and surrounding, the Coonamble LGA. However, lack of visitor access is a significant issue in regards to the Macquarie Marshes Nature Reserve, as there is currently no public visitor access.

In 2012, the NSW Visitor Economy Taskforce made a recommendation that the National Parks and Wildlife (NPWS) Act 1974 be amended to develop and promote access, services and facilities for visitors that are compatible with the conservation of National Parks' natural and cultural values. The NSW Government did not support the recommendation as it considered the legislation already supported these activities. However, this is certainly not the case regarding visitor access to the Macquarie Marshes Nature Reserve. Coonamble Shire Council would hope that the NPWS Sustainable Tourism Action Plan is promptly released and that it will support these activities.

### Supporting and growing local events

The Coonamble LGA has a very strong annual events sector including the Coonamble Rodeo & Campdraft, the Moorambilla Festival, the Coonamble Greyhound Racing Carnival, Dinner under the Stars, the Melbourne Comedy Festival Roadshow, bush picnic racing, Coonamble and Gulargambone Gold Cups, Gulargambone and Coonamble Annual Shows and the Quambone Polocrosse Carnival.

The Coonamble Rodeo and Campdraft event was awarded triennial flagship funding in 2013 by Destination NSW. The event continues to grow each year attracting a crowd of over 4,000 people in 2013, with 3,000 visitors residing outside the Coonamble LGA.

However, event growth in the Coonamble LGA is constrained by a local accommodation shortage. Our local accommodation supply cannot meet the demands of a growing events market; most accommodation providers in the Coonamble Shire continue to experience high occupancy rates and during peak periods are forced to turn visitors away. Coonamble Shire Council is keenly

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awaiting the development of the state government's NSW Accommodation Supply Plan that was outlined as a key strategy in the NSW Visitor Economy Taskforce Report. We will welcome a plan that will undertake regular accommodation supply and demand studies to determine where the development of new visitor accommodation is required.

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission regarding tourism in local communities to the NSW Legislative Council's General Purpose Standing Committee No. 3.

Yours sincerely,

Rick Warren  
General Manager