

INQUIRY INTO TOURISM IN LOCAL COMMUNITIES

Organisation: Central NSW Councils (Centroc)

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Inquiry into Tourism in Local Communities

SUBMISSION

June 2013



Centroc's Mission is to be recognised as the lead organisation advocating on agreed regional positions and priorities for Central NSW whilst providing a forum for facilitating regional co-operation and sharing of knowledge, expertise and resources; effectively nurturing sustainable investment and infrastructure development.

www.centroc.com.au

27 June 2013

Reference: kk:vp 061327
Enquiries: Ms J Bennett: 0428 690 935

The Hon. Natasha Maclaren-Jones MLC
Committee Chair
General Purpose Standing Committee No3.
Legislative Council
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
Sydney NSW 2000

Dear Committee,

Re: Inquiry into Tourism in Local Communities

Centroc is a large and long standing voluntary association of councils of varying sizes ranging from populations of around 2500 to populations of close to 40,000. It has received national recognition for its work in delivering measurable benefits to the members it serves. This recognition includes commentary and awards at the State and National levels for example the Productivity Commission and most recently the Minister for Local Government for NSW, The Hon Don Page. Most importantly, it is valued by its members.



Central NSW Councils (Centroc) comprises the Local Government Areas of Bathurst, Blayney, Boorowa, Cabonne, Cowra, Forbes, Harden, Lachlan, Lithgow, Oberon, Orange, Parkes, Upper Lachlan, Weddin, Wellington, Young and Central Tablelands Water.

It has two objectives, one around advocacy and the other around supporting members operations.

The Centroc Board is made up of the 34 Mayors, elected representatives and General Managers of its member Councils who determine priority for the region. These priorities are then progressed via sponsoring Councils. For more advice on Centroc programming and priorities, please go to our website at www.centroc.com.au/publications

Tourism is very important business for our region where our members work closely with Regional Tourism Organisations, particularly Central NSW Tourism (CNSWT). This submission has been developed in conjunction with CNSWT and includes feedback from Centroc member Tourism Managers.

Currently this region is near completion its Destination Management Plan and advice in this submission includes draft advice from this document.

In the first instance the region would like to commend the Government for its vision to double tourism by 2020 and Central NSW is already well into the strategic work to plan for this outcome.

Tourism has always presented a challenge to government where there has been a school of thought suggesting that it should not attract financial support. This region does not support this position for the following reasons:

- The whole community benefits from tourism financially. The visitor economy provides significant income streams that proffer resilience to communities;
- The whole community benefits from tourism socially. Examples include the growth in social capital as communities deliver events, visitors bringing new ideas and viewing communities through new eyes adding to civic pride and understanding;
- Where it is well managed, tourism also offers environmental benefits; and
- New ideas, growth in tolerance, connection to people and the development of networks into communities further afield grow resilience and enable better governance.

Regarding the terms of reference for this inquiry, Centroc provides the following feedback on the value and impacts of tourism in local communities.

1. The value of tourism to New South Wales communities and the return on investment (ROI) of Government grants and funds

Tourism Research Australia, 2012 has found that tourism is economically important to Central NSW accounting for 5.1% of the local economy, ranking the region 7th most economically important tourism region in NSW.¹ Of course much depends on how measurement is done, where for example the Central West Transport Needs Study identifies tourism as the third largest industry in Central NSW, ahead of manufacturing.²

The Central West region attracted an average of approximately 2.5 million domestic visitors each year between 2009-2012 with over 60% comprising day-trippers and the remainder encompassing overnight visitors (see Table 1 below). The Centroc region recorded an average of over 3.0 million visitors during the same period.³

Table 1 : Domestic Visitation by LGA, Annual Average for 2009-2012

| Area | Visitor Nights (‘000) | Average Length of Stay (Days) | Overnight Visitors (‘000) | Day-Trippers (‘000) | Total Visitors (‘000) |
|----------|--------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|
| Bathurst | 627 | 2.3 | 272 | 584 | 856 |
| Blayney | 98 | 2.9 | 34 | 76 | 110 |
| Boorowa | 28 | 2.2 | 12 | 13 | 25 |
| Cabonne | 81 | 2.3 | 35 | 52 | 87 |
| Cowra | 297 | 2.6 | 116 | 132 | 248 |
| Forbes | 138 | 2.6 | 53 | 64 | 116 |

¹ Draft Central NSW Destination Management Plan 2013 p 91

² Central West Transport Needs Study 2010 p C 15

³ Central NSW Regional Economic Development Strategy 2012 with source information from Tourism Research Australia

| | | | | | |
|---------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Harden | 41 | 2.2 | 19 | 20 | 39 |
| Lachlan | 205 | 4.2 | 48 | 37 | 85 |
| Lithgow | 0 | 2.3 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Oberon | 5 | 2.3 | 2 | 2 | 4 |
| Orange | 603 | 2.5 | 237 | 475 | 712 |
| Parkes | 308 | 2.7 | 115 | 90 | 205 |
| Upper Lachlan | 116 | 2.4 | 49 | 75 | 125 |
| Weddin | 29 | 2.2 | 13 | 20 | 33 |

Note: Year Ending June 2012

The term Visitor Economy is increasingly used to reflect a broader economic value of tourism in communities. The Visitor Economy Taskforce suggests that this is because the Visitor Economy includes 'both the direct contribution of tourism activities, along with indirect effects via the supply chain, the impact of capital investment and collective Government expenditure in relation to the visitor economy.'⁴

To achieve a doubling of NSW's overnight visitor expenditure to \$36.6 billion by 2020, Central NSW's contribution would become \$1,159.6 billion.⁵

The 2012 accounts indicate that Central NSW's total overnight visitor expenditure was \$804m where \$749m was domestic overnight and \$55m international overnight. Including in-direct expenditure, estimated by TSA at a multiplier of 0.92. Therefore if Central NSW were to double overnight expenditure the visitor economy would be worth over \$2 billion by 2020.⁶

The Tourism Satellite Account (TSA) uses the NVS and IVS to estimate regional visitor expenditure, and figures have a margin of statistical error. The National Satellite Accounts do not take into account the added benefit of the VFR market from the expenditure by the hosts.

Where the advice above suggests that the measurement of the value of tourism is variable, critical to the success of the NSW admirable vision of doubling the visitor economy will be ensuring that the government invests in measuring the spend. This will require agreement on indicators and their measurability.

Further, when considering measurability, the region is concerned that "intra regional" spend of day trippers is not being considered. Given that the success of growing our own strategies in this region must have in the first instance our communities celebrating each other, including the VFR market in their activities and using word of mouth campaigns such as the recently developed 100,000 hands project, this region commends that intra-regional and the spend of day trippers be measured.

Recommendation 1: The region recommends that the Standing Committee report to the State that effort be taken in regarding measuring the value of the visitor economy including VFR and intra-regional spend by day trippers.

To illustrate the significant economic benefit, please find a case study which tells the story of the Canowindra Balloon Festival. This event is actively cross promoted through the region's local tourism organisations and people from across the Centroc and Central NSW Tourism regions travel

⁴ NSW Visitor Economy Taskforce 2012 quoted in the Draft Central NSW Destination Management Plan 2013 p 92

⁵ Draft Central NSW Destination Management Plan 2013 p 92

⁶ Ibid

into Canowindra. Both local and state government contributions are included to illustrate return on investment. As can be seen, 50% of the spend is by day trippers travelling within the region. To exclude this from the accounting of the tourism spend would therefore have a dramatic effect over this region's contribution to the State effort. Further, this case study illustrates the value of the intra-regional work being undertaken in Central NSW, and recognises the importance of getting funding into the regions both through supporting the RTO as well as direct funding.

Besides the direct dollar value, there is also the in-kind support of the volunteer hours spent in communities supporting the funding from various levels of government. This is considerable and comes with it all sorts of unintended positive consequences around community capacity building.

CASE STUDY – CANOWINDRA BALLOON FESTIVAL

| | 2011 | 2013 |
|--|--------|--------|
| Total visitors to Canowindra over the 10 day event | 11,299 | 15,100 |
| % of local visitors (Cabonne, Blayney, Cowra and Orange) | | 39% |
| % of visitors from Central NSW | | 20% |
| % of visitors from Sydney and other NSW | | 35% |
| % of visitors from interstate | | 6% |

- Approx. 50/50 mix of day trippers and overnight stays (1 – 15 nights)
- Approx. 2/3 visiting for the event with another 1/3 having dual reasons for visit, including VFR

Visitors drawn from outside local area due to increase marketing spend made possible with government funding.

| | 2011 | 2013 |
|---|--------------------|--------------------|
| Accommodation spend | \$304,798 | \$342,212 |
| Visitor spend (combination day trip and overnight stay) | \$1,049,600 | \$1,519,200 |
| Value of media generated | \$183,661 | \$289,813 |
| Total economic benefit in \$ | \$1,536,438 | \$2,151,225 |
| Total State Government \$ contribution | \$20,000 | \$15,000 |
| Total Local Government \$ contribution | \$5,000 | \$15,000 |

Finally, it is important to note the importance of getting funding into the regions both through supporting the Regional Tourism Organisation as well as direct funding local ventures. As can be seen from the advice in the next section, building regional collaboration is of significant value where the tourist rarely sees lga boundaries.

2. The value of tourism to regional rural and coastal communities

Tourism is particularly valuable to communities in Central NSW. Besides the advice above on the return on investment to government, social, environmental and governance benefits also accrue. These add up to a vibrant and growing tourism sector that brings resilience to our Murray Darling Basin communities. Further, where this region is well into the work, there is potential for substantial growth in this sector where a supported regional approach will show faster and better results.

Tourism is of varying value to member communities and it is a more than useful component of our diverse regional economy, assisting with inoculation against economic shocks like the GST and drought. Tourism operations in Central MNSW are typically small, owner operator to SME, often adding a dimension to existing income streams be it farmstay, bed and breakfast, pick your own, wine or olive oil tasting.

An example is advice from Grenfell as follows:

We estimate that the Grenfell Henry Lawson Festival, is worth \$1 million to the local economy. Even though \$1 million isn't much compared to other regional towns, for a town the size of Grenfell it is massive. I would like to see the \$ value linked back to town size in some way to help level the playing fields when we just compare one event to another event irrespective of the town size.

We assume year round that visitors who stay the night spend \$109 in Grenfell. Our data from the visitor centre indicated there are approximately 15000 visitors a year (although we know we get many visitors to town who never enter the VIC). Weddin Shire is receiving millions of dollars from visitors each year via local businesses, many of which don't realise they are impacted by tourism, so even though we are a small town, per capita would make an interesting comparison.

Please find to the right an example of an infogram informing our region's leaders on the value of the visitor economy and ways in which we can grow it. This is an example of the work undertaken by the leaders of the region at the Centroc Summit last November. It shows that this region recognizes the value of tourism and is growing in its capacity to grow the visitor economy.

The whole community benefits from tourism socially for example visitors bring new ideas and views communities through new eyes adding to civic pride and understanding. This is more so the case in our smaller communities who report that as shops respond to the needs of tourists, so the level and breadth of service to community members improves.

Further, civic pride and with its corollary benefits in resilience grows as communities understand the value to others of an experience in Central NSW. Of note is the value of the heritage experience, both European and indigenous. There are over 1000 products in this region that can be developed into experiences often with significant potential. For example this

Growing the Visitor Economy and its value to the Bathurst community

What is the visitor economy worth to Bathurst today? Destination NSW provides advice that the Bathurst Visitor economy is valued at \$159,000,000 a year where the total value of the visitor economy across Central NSW is over \$618,000,000.

Retaining and capturing greater spend for Bathurst's visitor economy Estimations from Bathurst Visitor Information Centre and Destination NSW figures for Bathurst the year ending September 2011 show how the local spend occurs from visitors staying with friends and relatives, day trippers and those staying in paid accommodation.

| Staying with family & friends and Day Trippers | | | Staying in Paid Accommodation | | |
|---|----------------------|-------------------------|---|----------------------|-------------------------|
| Category of spend | Amount spent per day | Amount retained locally | Category of spend | Amount spent per day | Amount retained locally |
| Entertainment | \$16 | \$14 | Entertainment | \$15 | \$13 |
| Petrol | \$12 | \$10 | Petrol | \$25 | \$22 |
| Meat (bring out \$50 a head every second night) | \$25 | \$22 | Meat out | \$50 | \$45 |
| Groceries/Other | \$15 | \$12 | Groceries/Other | \$15 | \$4 |
| Take home shopping | \$15 | \$13 | Take home shopping | \$20 | \$18 |
| | | | Accommodation | \$71 | \$68 |
| | \$91 | \$85 | | \$136 | \$114 |
| Percentage of spend captured locally 78.3% | | | Percentage of spend captured locally 83.7% | | |
| Visitors day/night | 785,000 | \$28 | Visitors nights staying in Paid Accommodation | 488,000 | \$136 |
| Value of spend locally per day | \$28 | | Value of spend locally per day | \$136 | |
| Total local spend | \$55,155,000 | | Total local spend | \$55,648,000 | |

What if we added a spend of \$15 per couple on local products and experiences through a campaign like 100,000 hands where key messages supporting the brand value were promoted both locally and across Central NSW?

| Staying with family & friends and Day Trippers | | | Staying in Paid Accommodation | | |
|---|----------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|
| Category of spend | Amount spent per day | Amount retained locally | Category of spend | Amount spent per day | Amount retained locally |
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| Groceries/Other | \$15 | \$12 | Groceries/Other | \$15 | \$4 |
| Take home shopping | \$15 | \$13 | Take home shopping | \$20 | \$18 |
| 100,000 hands | \$15 | \$13 | Accommodation | \$71 | \$68 |
| | \$98 | \$78 | 100,000 hands | \$15 | \$13 |
| Visitors day/night | 785,000 | \$28 | Visitors nights | \$211 | \$177 |
| Value of spend per day | \$28 | | Value of spend per day | \$177 | |
| Total local spend | \$11,733,000 | | Total local spend | \$103,382,000 | |
| An uplift of | | | An uplift of | \$7,320,000 | |

Visitors are looking to spend more, and would do so, if the right offer was packaged up. A price point of \$15 is an attractive level to pitch experiences and products to meet mass appeal.

Conversations that can create millions of dollars of value to the Bathurst community

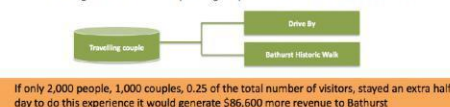


Increase \$15 a day spend, by adding a new entertainment, such as a tasting room and promoting the sale of local wine and food can add \$19 million to Bathurst's local economy every year.

Creating and monetising the visitor experience



Building the visitor economy through experiences The Bathurst Historic Walk



If only 2,000 people, 1,000 couples, 0.25 of the total number of visitors, stayed an extra half day to do this experience it would generate \$86,500 more revenue to Bathurst

| Activity | Item of expenditure | Notes | Amount created \$65.00 |
|----------|-------------------------|----------------|------------------------|
| Sights | History Museum | @ \$4 a head | \$8 |
| Sights | Food Museum | @ \$10 a head | \$20 |
| Sights | Art Gallery | \$20 Gift shop | \$20 |
| Lunch | Sandwiches | @ \$5 a head | \$16 |
| Lunch | Purport of strawberries | \$3.80 | \$3.80 |
| Lunch | 2 x Coffee | @ \$5.50 | \$7 |
| Keepake | Put of regional jam | \$12 | \$12 |

Modeling the economic value add from a visitor need

Emotional need to get away from distractions and reconnect to family and friends in a natural setting: The Bridle Track experience

| Visitor Need | Recommendation to self and others | Amount created \$42,470 |
|---------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Experience | The Bridle Track camping gateway | |
| Consideration | Googling the Bridle Track | |

region has the only Chinese bush ranger. This is a sensational fit with the current State priority targeting the Chinese international market.

Central NSW is just coming to understand its significant heritage resource as a result of the work being undertaken in its Destination Management Planning process and new strategies for marketing and product development are underway.

Well managed, tourism also offers environmental benefits. This region is near completion of its Destination Management Plan which recognises that protection of the natural asset in this region is critical to growing the tourism experience. Research in the region shows that space, the vistas around each corner of the region's rolling landscapes and the night sky show a good fit with current upward trends in visitor preferences.

Finally, new ideas, growth in tolerance, connection to people and the development of networks into communities further afield grow resilience and enable better governance.

3. Impacts of tourism

a. Infrastructure services provision and asset management

Infrastructure in the region relevant to the tourist includes transport, water, sewer, passive and active parks, toilets, caravan parks, an international racing circuits and a radio telescope. Of note is broadband and telecommunications' infrastructure. Not considered in this response are motels and other privately owned infrastructure.

Responsibility for and funding of these assets is from all levels of government and in the case of telecommunications includes the private sector (NBN Co and Telstra in particular).

While the Newell, Lachlan Valley Way, Golden Highway and roads to the west are growing in their importance to tourism in the region, road access into Sydney is key to this region's visitor economy. Congestion in the Blue Mountains on both the Great Western is a growing deterrent for the Sydney visitor where there is little to offer by way of public transport given it is designed as the mode of last resort for people without cars.

The region implores the State to expedite the development of the Bells Line where the weekend visitor experience for the tourist from Sydney currently ends with the terrible frustration of crawling through the mountains on a Sunday afternoon return trip.

Safety is also a concern where regional examples include:

- The need for safety works on the Bells Line;
- The need for safety works on the Newell in particular but also to manage the roads in the west of the region experiencing the significantly growing conflict between high productivity vehicles (HPV) and recreational vehicles (RVs); and
- Metropolitan drivers having poorer driver capability on rural particularly unsealed rural roads.

Street beautification programs like the "Main Street Program" offer significant value to both the visitor and resident experience. This region would also like to have added into the mix heritage restoration programming.

Providing a growing number of clean toilets with long opening hours is the role of Councils. Visitor centres, parks, museums and galleries are also used a great deal by tourists. Councils have a growing responsibility for these where there is also some volunteer support for their staffing in this region.

Signage is also a responsibility of Councils where there are increasing calls by tourism operators for better interpretive as well as directional signage. Councils are also increasingly providing dedicated pull off bays with information and directional signage.

Where the region's draft Demand Management Plan has identified sporting tourism as a growing sector with potential, Councils typically have control over facilities for active recreation though water sports and golf are often managed by other entities. Of note in the region are areas like Mount Canobolas where facilitation of plans for management between the various government agencies responsible such high value tourism destinations will add significant benefit to the region.

Bathurst Regional Council has provided advice that it has experienced ongoing problems with the Department of Planning with regard to the zoning of Mount Panorama. Happily recent advice is that the Minister has provided direction to resolve this. The concern is though that the management of high value tourism destinations is being hampered by other levels of government where it is requested that the State assist with the facilitation of mechanisms to deliver the sustainable growth of the visitor economy in this region.

Members also provide advice that better and more tourism friendly infrastructure in National Parks would add value.

Of note is broad band and telecommunications' infrastructure. Given that trip planning and booking is increasingly an online experience, the Centroc Board is feeling alarm at the lack of broadband and the number of mobile black spots in this region. To date the NBN has not been scheduled for the Centroc region though CNSWT member Mid Western has work planned. This region is well into collaborative activities which require broadband, for example the 100,000 hands program. Please see a screen shot of the 100,000 hands facebook site to the right.



This submission has not quantified the total expenditure in managing infrastructure or for that matter the loss to the region where the requisite infrastructure is not in place this area though from the advice above it can be seen that it is substantial and growing.

Recommendation 2: The region recommends that the Standing Committee report to the State that regarding infrastructure impacts:

-The Bells Line of Road upgrade and safety works be expedited;

-Safety works managing the growing conflicts between RVs and HPV be programmed;

-Funding support be considered for main street programming particularly that which supports the heritage value of the region;

-Consideration be given to assisting with funding for infrastructure that has a positive tourism impact; and

-Facilitation of structural and or management arrangements for high value tourism sites for example Mount Canobolas, Mount Panorama and National Parks.

b. Social impacts

As outlined above, positive impacts of tourism include civic pride, building social capital through bottom up development of events, tolerance, better and more goods and services.

Negative impacts are typically experienced by communities during larger events where from time to time in some local communities, people complain about having their towns and services “swamped” for example not being able to park or move about easily.

c. Unregulated tourism

Unregulated tourism has been understood in this region in three ways:

1. Tourism that “just happens” without support or structure for example bush rambles;
2. Secondly, tourism operators who are operating in the black market or illegally for example offering tours or providing accommodation without for example having insurance, having development consent or paying tax; and
3. RVs who “just park” rather than using caravan parks. Members are reporting that they are developing specialist infrastructure to manage this, for example RV “dumps.”

Regarding tourism that “just happens” the example of nature tourism has come up where for example in one lga there is an endangered species of bird which would be overrun if its location was promoted – and so it deliberately left unregulated. Orchids in Goobang National Park is another example. At the same time the local economy misses out on the income that could be generated.

Regarding operators in the black economy, there are a number of actual and possible impacts. Actual impacts include the loss of taxes and other public monies, the un-level playing field of those who do not pay tax etc and that this group do not work with industry groups for example in collaborative marketing.

Possible impacts include the risks to the visitor of venues or experiences that are not regulated by the proper authorities. Members have not reported that this is much of a problem in this region, though they do report that experiences such horse riding and canoeing that require insurances have ceased to exist. More importantly, given the State’s tourism priorities, the auspicing of festivals to help manage insurance costs is becoming a growing problem for Councils.

Recommendation 3: The region recommends that the Standing Committee report to the State that regarding the impacts of unregulated tourism that work should be undertaken into mechanisms to support tourism businesses and events that are impacted by insurance for example horse riding and festivals.

d. Employment opportunities

As advised above, tourism operations in this region are typically small and owner operated. Often the tourism operation augments another business for example farmstay. On top of this employment opportunities are affected by seasonality and the event program.

Lachlan Shire Council provides the following example:

This is a key development area for employment prospects in Lachlan. Particularly focusing on indigenous and European cultural heritage. There are no developed indigenous experiences in the region, and Lachlan has plenty to develop with adequate funding. Indigenous tourism has the capacity to provide new employment opportunities and pride in the community of their cultural heritage.

Tourism is a really untapped economic development industry in our region.

Visitors who stayed at Burrawang West Resort, who experienced the evening Corroboree and Galari Dancers exhibition have been mesmerised by our local indigenous talent.

Recommendation 4: The region recommends that the Standing Committee report to the State that regarding the impacts of tourism on employment, programming be considered and promoted that facilitates indigenous employment in tourism ventures.

4. The marketing and regulation of tourism

Members have provided advice that it is at times difficult for smaller communities to muster the matching funds for the larger sums of money now being proffered through Destination NSW. The current thinking is that \$50,000 is the minimum matched funding amount from DNSW yet \$10,000 or \$20,000 would provide a huge boost to smaller regional communities if applied well.

This is particularly the case as events and products are gradually grown over the years. There should be scope for the region to provide advice in support of special cases for smaller amounts of marketing funding for smaller communities.

The region also suggests that there should be dedicated funding to support cross regional collaboration to further build on the visitor experience.

Flexibility and self-determination in funding in the context of accountability and transparency is always preferred where local government in this region has a strong track record in this regard.

Having near completed the Destination Management Plan for the region, Central NSW is keen to work with the State on marketing the region.

Recommendation 5: The region recommends that the Standing Committee report to the State that regarding the marketing of tourism it:

-encourage regional collaboration recognizing that tourists do not see lga boundaries

-is flexible and recognizes that smaller communities may only be able to muster smaller matching funds as they grow festivals and other tourism products

5. The utilisation of special rate variations to support local tourism initiatives

There is currently no policy in this area where it is suggested the need for increased rating would be uncovered during the Integrated Planning and Reporting process, form part of community service plans and variations would be sought at the communities' direction. Seeking variations is a very arduous process and the rate cap should be removed to allow communities to fund programming through rates as they see fit.

For smaller communities who often have significant potential tourism product, rate variations just won't get there yet arguably the value to the State economy is significant and so the State should give consideration to funding other than rate variations.

6. Other

Central NSW Councils members are keen to ensure that permissible activities in zoning continue to foster tourism, for example allowing bed and breakfasts in residential zones.

Recommendation 6: The region recommends that the Standing Committee report to the State that ensuring permissible activities in zoning continue to foster tourism, for example allowing bed and breakfasts in residential zones, is a priority.

Once again, thank you for providing this opportunity to give thought to this issue. For further advice in regards to this submission please contact the Centroc Executive Officer, Ms Jennifer Bennett on 0428 690 935.

Yours sincerely,

Cr Ken Keith

Chair

Central NSW Councils (Centroc)



Ken Keith as Elvis at the Parkes Elvis Festival 2013