

**Submission
No 67**

INQUIRY INTO TOURISM IN LOCAL COMMUNITIES

Organisation: Bland Shire Council

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The Hon Natasha Maclaren-Jones MLC
Chair
Inquiry Into Tourism In Local Communities
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Dear The Hon Natasha Maclaren-Jones MLC

Thank you for the opportunity for Bland Shire Council to provide a submission to the Legislative Assembly Committees Inquiry into tourism in local Communities, and I extend an invitation for the Committee to hold one of its public hearings in West Wyalong.

Background

The Bland Shire was proclaimed on 6 March 1906. The Bland Shire, West Wyalong is located in regional New South Wales and is centrally located to the following cities:

- Wagga Wagga – 156km
- Orange – 221km
- Dubbo – 258km
- Bathurst – 265km
- Albury – 273km
- Canberra – 276km
- Sydney – 491km
- Mildura – 550km
- Melbourne – 571km
- Adelaide – 910km
- Brisbane – 1,114km

The Bland Shire has a population of 5,865 and covers an area of 8,558 square kilometres. Towns and villages in the Bland Shire include West Wyalong, Wyalong, Barmedman, Mirrool, Naradhan, Tallimba, Kikiora, Ungarie and Weethalle.

The Bland Shire is surrounded by the Shires of Lachlan, Forbes, Weddin, Young, Temora, Coolamon, Narrandera and Carrathool.

The Bland Shire's history is deeply engrained in agriculture and gold production which continues through to today. The Barrick Cowal Gold Mine commenced construction in 2004 with gold production in 2006 and in 2012, Barrick Cowal produced 268,000 ounces of gold.

The Bland Shire is one of New South Wales largest cereal-growing areas producing wheat, barley, oats, triticale, cereal rye, chickpeas, field peas, lupins, canola and sorghum.

Eucalyptus oil production started in 1907 and the West Wyalong area has become one of the major world exporters of Eucalyptus oil in Australia.

That General Purpose Standing Committee No 3 inquire into and report on the value and impacts of tourism on local communities, and in particular:

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

The Bland Shire / West Wyalong is located on the junction of the Newell and Mid Western Highways and Goldfield Way that conveys over two million vehicles a year, with 75% of these being visitors and or tourist from Queensland, Victoria, South Australia, Tasmania and Western Australia. The Bland Shire has 14 motels and two caravan parks that offers accommodation to the visitors / tourists and provides employment and secondary and multiplier benefits for the Bland Shire, New South Wales and Australia.

The NSW Governments Trade & Investments Visitor Economy Taskforce estimates that:

- Tourism alone supports 289,600 jobs in NSW (160,300 direct and 129,300 indirect jobs)
- Direct tourism employment in NSW ranks above employment for agriculture, forestry and fishing and mining;
- Total NSW tourism consumption is \$28.7 billion;
- Tourism contributes \$11.1 billion to the State's Gross State Product – this ranks above agriculture, forestry and fishing and just below mining;
- There are more than 94,000 tourism businesses in NSW, of which 51,000 are micro, small or medium-sized;
- The NSW Events calendar generates an estimated \$600 million per annum in direct expenditure for NSW;
- Business events expenditure in NSW is estimated at \$778 million;
- There were 149,375 million international and domestic visitor nights spent in NSW in the year ending December 2011;
- Overnight visitor expenditure to NSW is currently \$19.3 billion (\$18.3 billion in 2009);
- Overnight visitor expenditure in NSW is currently 40 per cent from intrastate visitors, 33 per cent interstate visitors and 27 per cent international visitors;
- Domestic travel is changing: in 1998, 29 per cent of interstate trips to NSW were by air and 63 per cent by road. In 2011, 44 per cent of trips were by air and 51 per cent were by road.

In 2009 the previous Government introduced a new regional Tourism program called Regional Tourism Partnership Program. In summary this program provided for a boost in funding and was structured in two parts. One component was classified as Capacity funding (i.e. funds to meet the administration costs of the Regional Tourist Organisation), and the

second component was classified as Demand Funds which was marketing dollars based on \$ for \$ funding.

The Bland Shire Council is a member of Riverina Regional Tourism and to the best of my knowledge Bland Shire Council has not received any Demand Funding to develop physical tourism products and destinations.

The NSW Government established Destination NSW in 2011 to lead the State's tourism and events agenda and has committed \$125 million a year to Destination NSW for the next four years.

Whilst the State Government has committed \$125 million a year to Destination NSW and Tourism in NSW, the vast majority of this is spent in Sydney, the Blue Mountains, the North, Central and South Coasts, whilst the rest of the State receives substantially less. In 2013, the NSW Government's Destination NSW has released The Regional Visitor Economy Funding (RVEF) program providing a total budget allocation of \$7.2 million for Regional NSW, hence \$118 million is allocated for Sydney. To access the RVEF, the applicant must have matching funds of \$50,000 which will make it difficult for organisations to apply.

Bland Shire Council needs to develop physical tourism products and destinations including gold, tin and eucalyptus. The Bland Shire has 25 State Forests, Reserves and a National Park that needs to be developed to attract tourists and visitor to spend more time in the Bland Shire.

One suggestion would be to allocate more of the \$125 million to Regional New South Wales to develop physical tourism products and destinations that can be accessed directly by Local Government Councils and not having to go through Regional Tourism Organisations.

2. the value of tourism to regional, rural and coastal communities

As mentioned previously the Bland Shire / West Wyalong is located on the junction of the Newell and Mid Western Highways and Goldfield Way that conveys over two million vehicles a year, with 75% of these being visitors and or tourist from Queensland, Victoria, South Australia, Tasmania and Western Australia. The Bland Shire has 14 motels and two caravan parks that offers accommodation to the visitors / tourists and provides employment and secondary and multiplier benefits for the Bland Shire, New South Wales and Australia.

3. the impacts of tourism on Local Government Areas, including:

a) infrastructure services provision and asset management

The Bland Shire Council needs to develop physical tourism products and destinations including gold, tin and eucalyptus. The Bland Shire has 25 State Forests, Reserves and a National Park that needs to be developed to attract tourists and visitor to spend more time in the Bland Shire. The 14 motels and two caravan parks that offer accommodation in the Bland Shire are dated and are in need of renovating and upgrading.

The Bland Shire Council and Community have recently agreed to investigate in developing a new Visitor Information Centre that may be incorporated into a multifunctional community centre.

b) social impacts

As mentioned previously the Bland Shire / West Wyalong is located on the junction of the Newell and Mid Western Highways and Goldfield Way that conveys over two million vehicles a year, with 75% of these being visitors and or tourist from Queensland, Victoria, South Australia, Tasmania and Western Australia. The Bland Shire Council and Community have recently agreed to investigate in developing a new Visitor Information Centre.

The Bland Shire has 14 motels and two caravan parks that offers accommodation to the visitors / tourists and provides employment and secondary and multiplier benefits for the Bland Shire, New South Wales and Australia.

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c) unregulated tourism

The Bland Shire is not aware of unregulated tourism activities in the Riverina.

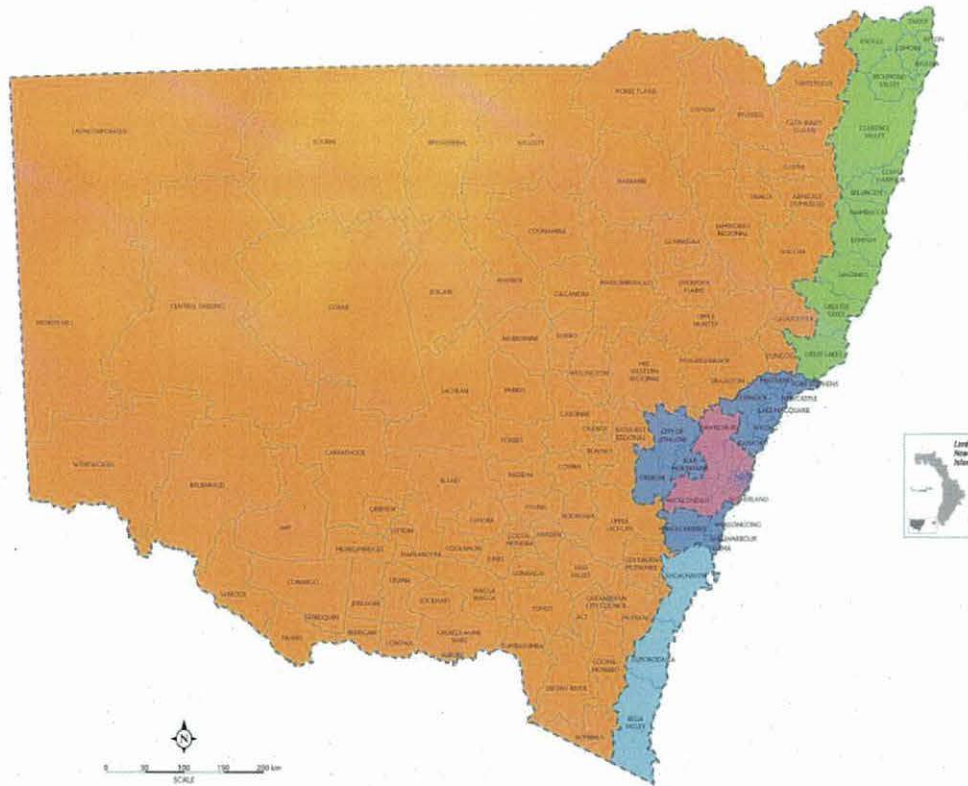
d) employment opportunities

As mentioned previously, the Bland Shire has 14 motels and two caravan parks that offers accommodation to the visitors / tourists and provides employment and secondary and multiplier benefits for the Bland Shire, New South Wales and Australia.

4. the marketing and regulation of tourism

The NSW Governments Trade & Investments Visitor Economy Taskforce and Visitor Economy Taskforce Industry Action Plan have been developed to support tourism in Sydney, the Blue Mountains, the North, Central and South Coasts. The 13 Regional Tourism Organisations have been replaced with the following five zones:

- Greater Sydney
- Sydney Surrounds
- North Coast
- South Coast
- Inland:



This new structure will make it difficult to market tourism in Regional NSW.

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

More details need to be provided, but this could be used with State Government Funds to develop the Tourism industry in New South Wales.

6. any other related matter.

It appears that the NSW Governments Trade & Investments Visitor Economy Taskforce and Action Plan were weighted on comments and submissions from organisations based in and around Sydney, the Blue Mountains, the North, Central and South Coasts.

With the uptake and use of new mobile digital technologies used to access information and to make accommodation and tour bookings, investment needs to be made on the smart phone network in Regional NSW to improve the mobile phone coverage.

Yours sincerely

Jeff Stien
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