



The Hon. Andrew Stoner MP

Deputy Premier

Minister for Trade and Investment

Minister for Regional Infrastructure and Services

Minister for Tourism and Major Events, Minister for Small Business

Minister for the North Coast

14 October 2014



Mr David Blunt
Clerk of the Parliaments and Clerk of the Legislative Council
The Department of the Legislative Council
Parliament House
Macquarie St
Sydney NSW 2000

Dear Mr Blunt

Re: GSPC 3 Inquiry into Tourism in Local Communities

Please find attached the Government's response to the Inquiry into Tourism in Local Communities by GSPC 3.

For further information please do not hesitate to contact Ms Lis Davies, Senior Advisor in my office on 9230 2281.

Yours sincerely

The Hon. Andrew Stoner MP
Deputy Premier

Received at 12:00pm
Tuesday 14 October 2014

NSW Government Response to Legislative Council Inquiry: Tourism in Local Communities

The NSW Government is committed to fostering regional and rural tourism in NSW to ensure that the sector operates to a world class standard. Overnight visitor expenditure in NSW plays a vital role in the State's economy, with a direct value of \$22.2 billion per year. The Government's ten year strategic business plan, *NSW 2021*, acknowledges the sector's importance and commits to doubling overnight visitor expenditure in NSW by 2020.

As part of this commitment, the Government commissioned the Visitor Economy Taskforce to undertake a wide-ranging review of the tourism sector in 2011-2012. The *Visitor Economy Industry Action Plan (VEIAP)*, released in December 2012, outlines a whole-of-government strategy for improving the competitiveness of the NSW tourism industry. Reforms include the introduction of destination management plans, changes to funding for Regional Tourism Organisations and the implementation of the new Regional Visitor Economy Fund.

The Government is currently in its second year of implementing the VEIAP and delivery of key actions is on track. Many of the Legislative Council Inquiry's recommendations are already being considered and actioned as part of the VEIAP.

The NSW Government welcomes the report of the Legislative Council General Purpose Standing Committee No. 3 (the Committee) into tourism in local communities and accepts the majority of the Committee's recommendations. The Government's response to the Committee's 25 recommendations is outlined below.

Summary of Responses to Recommendations

1	That the NSW Government commission a review of the effectiveness of the New South Wales destination management planning system and Regional Visitor Economy Fund by March 2019.	Supported
2	That Destination NSW consider offering destination management workshops in more locations throughout regional New South Wales and more actively involve councils as the recognised local infrastructure providers.	Supported in principle
3	That Destination NSW review the Regional Visitor Economy Fund application process for quarantined funds in order to simplify the application process and consider allowing for longer term operational funding.	Supported in principle
4	That Destination NSW review the assessment criteria for contestable funding applications to allow for holistic assessment of the merits of a project or initiative.	Supported
5	That Destination NSW consider providing Regional Visitor Economy Fund grants for periods longer than 12 months.	Supported (currently being implemented)
6	That Destination NSW consider reducing the minimum matched funding threshold for Regional Visitor Economy	Supported in principle

	Fund grants.	
7	That Destination NSW articulate to the tourism industry an update on the strategic vision and actions as outlined in the Visitor Economy Industry Action Plan.	Supported
8	That the NSW Government provide assistance, where requested by local councils, to examine the possible use of a special rate variation to renew and expand visitor economy infrastructure outside of the standard rate cap.	Supported (currently being implemented)
9	That Destination NSW consider allocating Regional Visitor Economy Fund grants to existing tourism assets.	Supported (currently being implemented)
10	That the NSW Government consider providing additional funding for local government projects that are specifically related to visitor economy infrastructure.	Supported (currently being implemented)
11	That the NSW Government request the Federal Government to investigate a more effective method of measuring populations when determining Financial Assistance Grants, that takes into account peak population figures.	Supported in principle
12	That the NSW Government investigate implementing an appeals process for the National Parks and Wildlife Service to address difficulties with inter-agency or stakeholder outcomes.	Supported (currently being implemented)
13	That the NSW Government develop an information program for backpackers/ itinerant workers similar to the Snowy River Shire Council's 'The Little Black Book'.	Not supported
14	That the NSW Government promote that other communities experiencing alcohol related violence and anti-social behaviour are able to request the provisions provided by the Crimes and Other Legislation Amendment (Assault and Intoxication) Act 2014 and the Liquor Amendment Act 2014 to curb these impacts.	Supported in principle
15	That the NSW Government publish the results of the trial of the Holiday Rental Code of Conduct.	Supported in principle
16	That the NSW Government develop guidelines around camping in self-contained recreational vehicles and non-self-contained vehicles on public land.	Supported
17	That the NSW Government investigate further opportunities for tourism development in national parks including accommodation, camping, mountain bike trails and fossicking.	Supported
18	That the NSW Government seek to streamline the operation of planning approvals within the lease areas for New South Wales ski resorts to ensure that important infrastructure improvements, such as upgrades to lifts and other facilities, are not hampered by unwarranted red tape.	Supported in principle
19	That the NSW Government investigate opportunities for fossicking in national parks, a single access fee for state forests and linking information for fossicking activities on the Destination NSW website.	Supported in principle
20	That the NSW Government allow disused rail corridors in New South Wales, or land immediately adjoining the rails	Supported in principle

	that belong to the Government, to be developed into rail trails.	
21	That the NSW Government report on the potential for disused rail corridors to be restored to provide rail based tourism to regional areas and establish a rail travel tourism sector.	Supported in principle
22	That the NSW Government ensure that the Aboriginal Tourism Action Plan 2013-2016 specifically addresses skills issues which prevent broader take up and marketing of Indigenous tourism products.	Supported
23	That the NSW Government review its lease/rent/licencing fees for land that includes visitor information centres and consider the reduction of fees to acknowledge the important role of these centres in enhancing the visitor economy.	Not supported
24	That Destination NSW include a surf safety message on its website.	Supported (currently being implemented)
25	That the NSW Government review and report on current surf safety messages and their distribution throughout airlines, cruise ships and accommodation providers.	Supported

Recommendation 1: That the NSW Government commission a review of the effectiveness of the New South Wales destination management planning system and Regional Visitor Economy Fund by March 2019.

Government Response: Supported

The NSW Government supports a review of the Regional Visitor Economy Fund (RVEF) which received funding of \$21.6 million over three years, to 30 June 2016. The Government will review the RVEF in 2016. The review will consider all aspects of the Fund including destination management planning.

The NSW Government, through Destination NSW, has commissioned an analysis of the 25 destination management plans received since the commencement of the RVEF in 2013. A review of the plans, which identify the key attributes, strengths and weaknesses of specific destinations, will be used to inform Destination NSW's future investment and product development. The review will map themes and gaps in the destinations they cover. Relevant information from the review will be shared with stakeholders to assist in their own planning activities.

Recommendation 2: That Destination NSW consider offering destination management workshops in more locations throughout regional New South Wales and more actively involve councils as the recognised local infrastructure providers.

Government Response: Supported in principle

Destination NSW delivered destination management planning workshops in key regional centres in 2013 to support the roll out of the Regional Visitor Economy Fund and to build capacity and capabilities in regional NSW. Destination NSW is conducting new workshops in the 2014-15 financial year to provide support to regional stakeholders on a variety of subject areas including destination management planning. The schedule and locations of the workshops are available at: <http://www.destinationnsw.com.au/tourism/business-development-resources/nsw-first-workshops-program>.

The 2013 workshops were delivered in 15 locations around NSW. To maximise attendance within the allocated budget, workshops were held in locations that were likely to foster interest from stakeholders across areas that involved less than two hours' travel time. Details of the workshops' schedules and locations were communicated to Local Government NSW for their members. Destination NSW will repeat this practice for all future workshops to ensure members are aware of them.

Destination management planning was part of the 2014 Local Government NSW Tourism Conference's agenda. Destination NSW also provides destination management planning information via its corporate website, including a destination management template and a comprehensive list of Frequently Asked Questions, available at: <http://www.destinationnsw.com.au/tourism/business-development-resources/funding-and-grants/regional-visitor-economy-fund-rvef>. Destination NSW staff were, and continue to be, available to answer questions by phone and email.

Recommendation 3: That Destination NSW review the Regional Visitor Economy Fund application process for quarantined funds in order to simplify the application process and consider allowing for longer term operational funding.

Government Response: Supported in principle

All documentation relating to the Regional Visitor Economy Fund (RVEF) application process, whether for quarantined or operational funding, was reviewed after the initial round of funding in

2013-14. Where necessary, the documentation was simplified and/or clarified to ensure ease of use for applicants.

The RVEF provides a clear funding framework for all regional stakeholders. The framework enables Destination NSW to demonstrate how funding allocations are made and report to NSW Treasury.

All applications have to outline the project for which funding is sought. Whilst separate applications are required for each project, many sections relate to the applicants' details, which can be easily repeated if multiple applications are being submitted.

Applicants can currently access funds for a period of up to two years. The NSW Government is not supportive of allowing operational funding for periods longer than the current two years because the provision of longer term grants does not encourage enterprises to develop self-sustaining funding models, which is an aim of the Visitor Economy Industry Action Plan.

Recommendation 4: That Destination NSW review the assessment criteria for contestable funding applications to allow for holistic assessment of the merits of a project or initiative.

Government Response: Supported

The assessment criteria for the Regional Visitor Economy Fund (RVEF) will be examined as part of the 2016 review outlined in the Government's response to recommendation 1.

Assessment criteria for the RVEF were developed to progress the Government's target of doubling overnight visitor expenditure in NSW by 2020. The need for holistic assessment of the merits of a project is supported.

Recommendation 5: That Destination NSW consider providing Regional Visitor Economy Fund grants for periods longer than 12 months.

Government Response: Supported (currently being implemented)

Regional Visitor Economy Fund grants can be allocated for periods of more than 12 months. The Program guidelines state that "projects proposing two years of funding or implementation will only have the first 12 months of activity approved. The second year of funding will be dependent upon the project meeting all agreed KPIs."

Recommendation 6: That Destination NSW consider reducing the minimum matched funding threshold for Regional Visitor Economy Fund grants.

Government Response: Supported in principle

Destination NSW set the minimum matched funding threshold at \$50,000 to ensure that projects demonstrating the necessary scale to contribute to the 2020 target are supported. The Regional Visitor Economy Fund allows multiple stakeholders to form a consortium to enable them to reach the \$50,000 funding threshold and deliver projects together.

Previous NSW Government funding mechanisms, including the Regional Product Development and Regional Tourism Partnership Programs, were operated with lower funding thresholds. This resulted in a number of projects being supported which were not able to fully demonstrate effective results.

The Government will consider whether it is possible to reduce the minimum matched funding threshold for Regional Visitor Economy Fund grants without compromising the contribution these

funds make to the 2020 target, and will maintain or update the threshold accordingly by the end of 2014.

Recommendation 7: That Destination NSW articulate to the tourism industry an update on the strategic vision and actions as outlined in the Visitor Economy Industry Action Plan.

Government Response: Supported

Destination NSW and NSW Trade & Investment will invite the NSW Visitor Economy Council and the Visitor Economy Taskforce to an industry update on the Visitor Economy Industry Action Plan, planned for late 2014.

NSW Trade & Investment will also release a report, *Progressing the NSW Economic Development Framework*, before the end of 2014. This report will include an update on the implementation of the six NSW Industry Action Plans, including the Visitor Economy Industry Action Plan.

Recommendation 8: That the NSW Government provide assistance, where requested by local councils, to examine the possible use of a special rate variation to renew and expand visitor economy infrastructure outside of the standard rate cap.

Government Response: Supported (currently being implemented)

The NSW Government has developed information specifically tailored to assist councils who wish to apply for a special rate variation to support visitor economy initiatives.

In March 2013, the NSW Government, through the Division of Local Government, released the Integrated Planning and Reporting Manual for Local Government in NSW. The Manual provides information for councils looking to incorporate tourism as part of their long-term financial planning considerations. It also highlights the requirements for applying for a special rate variation to resource outcomes of Community Strategy Plans. In September 2013, the NSW Government also released simplified guidelines, *Guidelines for the Preparation of an Application for a Special Rate Variation to General Income for 2014/2015*, with a number of fact sheets on how to apply for a special rate variation.

The Manual, Guidelines as well as fact sheets on how to apply for a special rate variation are currently available on the Division of Local Government and the Independent Pricing & Regulatory Tribunal's websites. The guidelines and fact sheets have been updated for the 2014-15 rating year.

Recommendation 9: That Destination NSW consider allocating Regional Visitor Economy Fund grants to existing tourism assets.

Government Response: Supported (currently being implemented)

The Regional Visitor Economy Fund's criteria already include provisions to facilitate funding for projects that relate to existing tourism assets. An example of a project securing funding for an existing tourism asset is the development of a new multi-purpose conference centre at the Cadell on the Murray Motel Resort. This project was able to demonstrate how enhancing an existing product would further contribute to the NSW Government's target of doubling overnight visitor expenditure by 2020.

Any application seeking funding for product enhancement must demonstrate how it will increase overnight visitation to a region.

It should be noted that the Regional Visitor Economy Fund program guidelines articulate that “activities that would reasonably be seen as regular repairs and maintenance” and “upgrading or developing meeting and/or local community facilities – including picnic or playground areas, local parks, barbeques, meeting facilities and regional or town entry facilities” are deemed to be ineligible activities.

The NSW Government also supports investment in eligible infrastructure projects that demonstrate significant employment and investment outcomes through the Regional Industries Investment Fund and the State Investment Attraction Scheme, administered by NSW Trade & Investment.

Recommendation 10: That the NSW Government consider providing additional funding for local government projects that are specifically related to visitor economy infrastructure.

Government Response: Supported (currently being implemented)

The 2014-15 NSW Budget allocated \$110 million to a new Regional Tourism Infrastructure Fund to deliver infrastructure works that facilitate regional tourism growth and increase the economic competitiveness of the State. Funded through Restart NSW, it will enable regional destinations to develop their full potential by investing in critical visitor economy infrastructure, such as airport upgrades and cruise and rail trail infrastructure.

Significant support for infrastructure projects is also available to local governments through programs such as the Local Infrastructure Renewal Scheme. The Government is providing a total of \$100 million over six years for the implementation of the overall local infrastructure backlog policy, which includes the Scheme. Phases 1 and 2 of the Scheme saw the Government provide assistance to 87 councils for 138 individual projects throughout the State.

The NSW Government also supports investment in eligible infrastructure projects that can demonstrate significant employment and investment outcomes through the Regional Industries Investment Fund, administered by NSW Trade & Investment.

Recommendation 11: That the NSW Government request the Federal Government to investigate a more effective method of measuring populations when determining Financial Assistance Grants, that takes into account peak population figures.

Government Response: Supported in principle

The NSW Government will need to undertake further investigation to determine if the State would receive a substantive benefit from implementing Recommendation 11. The NSW Government will explore whether the peak population in NSW exceeds the normal population (as used in the current determination of the grants) by more than in other states, and assess the reliability of peak population data.

Recommendation 12: That the NSW Government investigate implementing an appeals process for the National Parks and Wildlife Service to address difficulties with inter-agency or stakeholder outcomes.

Government Response: Supported (currently being implemented)

The Office of Environment and Heritage (OEH) already has mechanisms in place to address any difficulties with inter-agency or stakeholder outcomes. The main mechanism is via its external complaints and allegations policy. To further enhance its standard of service and customer

engagement, OEH will develop a service charter outlining the Government's approach. OEH will actively promote this charter to its customers.

NPWS also has a dedicated Community and Stakeholder Engagement Team to build organisational capability and ensure stakeholder views are integrated into decision-making.

Formal engagement processes include:

- NPWS State Advisory Council
- 14 Regional Advisory committees
- Boards of Management
- World Heritage Area Advisory Communities
- Joint Management Advisory Committees

OEH is also committed to the NSW Government's Quality Regulatory Services Initiative, which ensures transparent appeal mechanisms for licensed activities and approvals. NPWS also participates in inter-agency forums and committees such as Bush Fire Management Committees and pest management committees, which have representation from stakeholders across all land tenures.

Recommendation 13: That the NSW Government develop an information program for backpackers/ itinerant workers similar to the Snowy River Shire Council's 'The Little Black Book'.

Government Response: Not supported

The NSW Government, through Destination NSW, already provides extensive information for the youth market in the 'Work Study Play' section of Destination NSW's consumer website at: <http://www.sydney.com/workstudyplay/home>. This page provides information on working holidays, study opportunities and accommodation options for staying in Sydney and Regional NSW as well as links to other information sources such as the Department of Immigration and Border Protection. 'Work Study Play' also provides information on Destination NSW's Chief Funster Experiment, which was part of Tourism Australia's Best Jobs in the World initiative.

The Committee should also note that there are a number of existing nationwide resources available that cover similar matters to those addressed in 'The Little Black Book'. These resources include:

- Harvest Trail, <http://jobsearch.gov.au/harvesttrail/>, a comprehensive online resource delivered by the Commonwealth Department of Employment.
- Immigration fact sheets issued by the Commonwealth Department of Immigration and Border Protection for Working Holiday (subclass 417) and Work and Holiday (subclass 462) visa holders, <http://www.immi.gov.au/Pages/Welcome.aspx>.
- Willing Workers on Organic Farms, <http://www.wwoof.com.au/>, an initiative that gives local and visiting workers "the opportunity to work on Australian Organic Farms, exchanging 4 - 6 hours work per day for your meals and accommodation, usually in the family home."

Recommendation 14: That the NSW Government promote that other communities experiencing alcohol related violence and anti-social behaviour are able to request the provisions provided by the *Crimes and Other Legislation Amendment (Assault and Intoxication) Act 2014* and the *Liquor Amendment Act 2014* to curb these impacts.

Government Response: Supported in principle

The NSW Government recently introduced a comprehensive package of reforms to combat drug and alcohol-related violence. The *Liquor Amendment Act 2014* provides a framework that enables precincts experiencing high levels of alcohol-related violence to be prescribed so that conditions and other trading restrictions can be imposed on licensed premises. The first precinct to be prescribed under these provisions is the Sydney CBD Entertainment precinct. Other precincts can be considered where there are high levels of alcohol-related violence.

Recommendation 15: That the NSW Government publish the results of the trial of the Holiday Rental Code of Conduct.

Government Response: Supported in principle

The Holiday Rental Code of Conduct trial is an industry initiative and reporting its outcomes is a matter for the industry.

Recommendation 16: That the NSW Government develop guidelines around camping in self-contained recreational vehicles and non-self-contained vehicles on public land.

Government Response: Supported

NSW planning and local government legislation both have a role in the regulation of camping. With limited exceptions, carrying out or providing for camping (e.g. in caravans, campervans, motorhomes, self-contained recreational vehicles and non-self-contained vehicles) on council or other public land requires council approval. The State Government encourages Councils to be proactive in preventing illegal camping.

Camping in a roadside rest area may be permitted, unless a 'no camping' or 'no overnight stays' sign has been placed there by a council or the Roads and Traffic Authority (RTA) (or other relevant authority). Enquiries about the current use of the rest areas along roads administered by the RTA may be made to that agency.

Roads and Maritime Services (RMS) will work with relevant government agencies with powers to regulate camping on public land, to develop guidelines around camping in self-contained recreational vehicles and non-self-contained vehicles in rest areas.

There will be a need to designate areas of Crown Land which are suitable for recreation vehicle camping, so that designated areas can be appropriately licensed / authorised. Guidelines for the appropriate and sustainable use and management of those sites will need to be consistent with the principles of the Crown Lands Review which was released in March 2014.

Camping is currently a permissible activity in State Forest. Forest Corporation NSW supports the development of guides for camping in State Forests.

To ensure sustainable use of NSW national parks, the protection of natural and cultural heritage values, and to meet the demands of target markets, NPWS carefully plans for the provision of a range of visitor accommodation. This includes built accommodation (e.g. cabins), semi-permanent accommodation (e.g. safari-style tents), tourist park-style accommodation and campgrounds suitable for caravans, campervans and tent-based camping. Provisions within The National Parks and Wildlife Regulation 2009 seek to reduce the undesirable consequences of unregulated camping.

Recommendation 17: That the NSW Government investigate further opportunities for tourism development in national parks including accommodation, camping, mountain bike trails and fossicking.

Government Response: Supported

The NSW Government supports increasing opportunities for tourism throughout NSW and within national parks. This is occurring as part of the implementation of the Visitor Economy Industry Action Plan.

As part of their ongoing activities, NPWS investigates opportunities for tourism development. To encourage visitation to regional NSW, NPWS has developed several visitation and nature tourism action plans to revitalise and establish visitor facilities, experiences and recreational opportunities in national parks. The action plans recognise the importance of continued access to activities such as fishing and boating and other recreational facilities to both local communities and visitors.

NPWS is also working on a number of initiatives to enhance the appeal of national parks to a diverse audience and improve the quality of visitor experiences. These include:

Accommodation

NPWS is committed to improving national parks' accommodation. This often requires infrastructure enhancements, adapting existing buildings or constructing new accommodation facilities. NPWS continues to investigate new options, such as standing camps, which provide unique overnight experience with minimal social, physical and environmental impacts on the sites' natural values. Materials can be stored on-site and erected during prescribed times for group bookings and tours. Some discrete permanent structures may be included, such as toilets, shelters, decking and raised platforms.

In 2012, NPWS introduced a new online booking system for hard-roofed and camping accommodation. Since its commencement, 46,692 bookings have been recorded for on-park accommodation, the equivalent of 129,473 room nights, with revenue of over \$6,700,000. Bookings for 2014 have already seen a 53 per cent revenue increase and a 60 per cent increase in room nights compared to the same period in 2013.

OEH and NPWS also continue to work with industry and commercial partners to better utilise their assets through visitor economy opportunities. Some of these initiatives include calling for Expressions of Interest (EOIs) for 10 properties in Sydney Harbour and Port Macquarie to enhance the public use and presentation of facilities. Other EOIs are also under consideration to develop visitor facilities in metropolitan and regional areas.

Camping

NPWS actively supports and promotes camping as a great experience and way to appreciate nature and national parks. NPWS manages approximately 470 campgrounds across NSW, with space for over 2,800 tents, 750 picnic sites, 660 lookouts and over 2,500 kilometres of walking tracks, as well as fire trails and management trails. The NPWS promotes camping and campgrounds through its corporate website and often provides online booking services to increase public accessibility.

NPWS runs a number of programs, such as *Campground Hosts* and *Nature Nomads*, which provide diverse camping experiences, particularly during off-peak periods.

Mountain biking

Following the rapid expansion of and demand for mountain biking in national parks, NPWS launched the *Sustainable Mountain Biking Strategy* in 2011 to provide high quality mountain biking to riders of all levels, in appropriate and safe locations. The strategy identifies eight prioritised locations across NSW to deliver mountain biking trails.

Two tracks, the Woodford to Oaks Mountain Bike Track in the Blue Mountains National Park and the new circuit at Five Mile Day-Use Area in Murray Valley National Park, are now complete. Stage three of the National Mountain Bike Series was held on this track.

A further four projects will be completed by the end of December 2015, and the remainder by end of June 2016. These include the new Thredbo Valley Track (with construction of around 8.5 kilometres of trail in the Kosciusko National Park) and a new loop track at Bantry Bay, Garigal National Park.

Fossicking

See response to recommendation 19.

Website improvements

In 2012, the NPWS made significant improvements to its website <http://www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au> with a new focus on visitor communication and engagement.

The website provides written and photographic content for 225 parks, 1,600 attractions, places to stay, events and guided tours around NSW. During 2013 the website attracted nearly 1.4 million visitors and almost 10 million page views – representing an increase of approximately 118 per cent from 2012.

The website will undergo further improvements, to be launched later in 2014. It will be optimised for mobile devices, and be more intuitive, with improved search, navigation and mapping capabilities. The content will also include volunteering, conservation and education information.

Recommendation 18: That the NSW Government seek to streamline the operation of planning approvals within the lease areas for New South Wales ski resorts to ensure that important infrastructure improvements, such as upgrades to lifts and other facilities, are not hampered by unwarranted red tape.

Government Response: Supported in principle

The Minister for Planning is the Responsible Planning Authority for NSW alpine resorts including Thredbo, Perisher Range (including Bullocks Flat), Mount Selwyn, Charlotte Pass, Kosciusko Mountain Retreat, Ski Rider and Sponars Chalet.

The Department of Planning and Environment (DPE) works with other Government departments to guide development of the alpine resorts while protecting the important natural values of the Kosciuszko National Park.

DPE is actively seeking to streamline the operation of planning approvals and reduce unwarranted red tape by:

- ensuring that matters such as minor repairs and maintenance which are of minimal environmental impact can be carried out without the need for any development assessment (exempt development);
- preparing a complying development policy for the alpine resorts to reduce overall numbers of development applications and improve processing times;
- reviewing the advertising requirements for alpine resort projects;
- reviewing the alpine planning policy in consultation with key government agencies and alpine resort stakeholders to ensure efficiency and effectiveness;
- reviewing the integrated development provisions for projects that require referral to the Office of Water and the Rural Fire Service; and

- entering into a memorandum of understanding with OEH to ensure the streamlined management of development in alpine resorts.

Recommendation 19: That the NSW Government investigate opportunities for fossicking in national parks, a single access fee for state forests and linking information for fossicking activities on the Destination NSW website.

Government Response: Supported in principle

Fossicking is presently allowed, with consent, in a small number of parks. NPWS is considering the recommendations of the Committee's Final Report, including exploring how fossicking could take place sustainably in national parks.

The Forestry Corporation of NSW (FCNSW) has recently reviewed its approach to fossicking in State forests and introduced a single state-wide permit, now available for all relevant State forests in NSW. Permits can currently be obtained online for an annual fee of \$25 plus GST.

NSW Trade & Investment has developed the *NSW Guide to Fossicking* which includes basic rules for small scale searches and sets out the legislation that fossickers must comply with before starting. It also shows whether permission to fossick is required, and how to obtain it. It details the amount of material that can be taken during a 48-hour period and penalties incurred in case of breach. The guide is available at: <http://www.resourcesandenergy.nsw.gov.au/landholders-and-community/fossicking-in-nsw>.

Destination NSW works with other relevant Government departments to ensure that the information on tourism products and experiences in national parks and state forests is included on its two consumer websites and that content published is current and contains links to relevant external sites including: <http://www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au> and <http://www.forestrycorporation.com.au/>.

Where appropriate, Destination NSW will work with relevant stakeholders to develop content relating to fossicking in NSW.

Recommendation 20: That the NSW Government allow disused rail corridors in New South Wales, or land immediately adjoining the rails that belong to the Government, to be developed into rail trails.

Government Response: Supported in principle

The NSW Government recognises that rail trails have the potential to bring social and economic benefits to local and regional communities. The Government takes a responsible approach to unused rail lines by considering their feasibility as potential rail corridors or rail trails on a case-by-case basis.

In the 2014-15 Budget, the NSW Government announced a \$110 million Regional Tourism Infrastructure Fund (RTIF). The RTIF will enable regional destinations to develop their full potential by investing in critical visitor economy infrastructure, which could include rail trail infrastructure. The RTIF is administered by Infrastructure NSW, and projects must meet Restart NSW requirements.

NSW Trade & Investment is currently reviewing and preparing recommendations to the Government in relation to the governance arrangements required to establish a program for rail trails generally, and the proposed Casino to Murwillumbah rail trail in particular, in consultation with Infrastructure NSW and Transport for NSW.

Applications for rail trails will need to be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

The NSW Government is somewhat constrained by Section 99A of the *Transport Administration Act 1988* which provides that rail way lines cannot be closed or rail infrastructure removed from a rail corridor unless authorised by an Act of Parliament. This applies even if the line is non-operational. Accordingly, unless closure of the line is authorised by an Act of Parliament, rail trails will have to be developed alongside existing rail infrastructure, which raises issues for safety and maintenance of the existing rail infrastructure including appropriate responsibility and governance associated with maintaining both the rail infrastructure and the rail trail.

Recommendation 21: That the NSW Government report on the potential for disused rail corridors to be restored to provide rail based tourism to regional areas and establish a rail travel tourism sector.

Government Response: Supported in principle

As stated in response to Recommendation 20, NSW Trade & Investment is currently reviewing and preparing recommendations to the Government in relation to the governance arrangements required to establish a program for rail trails generally, and the proposed Casino to Murwillumbah rail trail in particular, in consultation with Infrastructure NSW and Transport for NSW.

The Government takes a responsible approach to unused rail lines by considering their feasibility as potential rail corridors or rail trails on a case-by-case basis. In the 2014-15 Budget, the NSW Government announced a \$110 million Regional Tourism Infrastructure Fund (RTIF). The RTIF will enable regional destinations to develop their full potential by investing in critical visitor economy infrastructure, such as airport upgrades, cruise facilities and rail trail infrastructure.

Recommendation 22: That the NSW Government ensure that the Aboriginal Tourism Action Plan 2013-2016 specifically addresses skills issues which prevent broader take up and marketing of Indigenous tourism products.

Government Response: Supported

Destination NSW works closely with market ready and emerging NSW Aboriginal tourism operators to implement the Aboriginal Tourism Action Plan 2103-2016. This collaboration assists to address skills issues within the sector in a culturally acceptable manner.

The Plan is on track with a significant number of actions implemented including:

- Destination NSW employing a full time Aboriginal Tourism Sector Specialist to deliver the Aboriginal Tourism Action Plan;
- Delivering bi-annual NSW Aboriginal Tourism Operators workshops in partnership with market ready and emerging NSW Aboriginal tourism operators. The most recent workshop was held in Narooma on 9 and 10 September 2014 in partnership with Aboriginal tour operator Ngaran Ngaran;
- The development of an Aboriginal Tour Guide Pilot Program in Sydney, to be included in the NSW Aboriginal Tour Operators Workshops;
- Destination NSW contributing to the establishment and inaugural delivery of Corroboree, as a major Indigenous cultural festival in Sydney; and
- The Sector Specialist, Aboriginal Tourism, representing Destination NSW on the Indigenous Tourism Group, which was established as part of the Commonwealth Government's Tourism 2020 strategy. The Group focuses on ways to increase the quality and quantity of Australia's Indigenous tourism product offering, and the participation of Indigenous Australians in the tourism industry.

The Office of the Small Business Commissioner (OSBC) also provides assistance to Aboriginal small businesses through the Small Biz Connect program. Through the program, small businesses receive advice on running or starting their businesses, accessing face-to-face support and skill development. The Small Biz Bus offers a mobile advisory and information service for small business. The bus travels across NSW, delivering face to face and personalised assistance.

Some of the initiatives currently being undertaken by the OSBC, which relate to the Aboriginal Tourism Action Plan include:

- providing Small Biz Connect business advisors with cultural training to support them in their ongoing interaction with Aboriginal small business owners;
- regularly communicating information about the Small Biz Bus schedules to the regional offices of NSW Aboriginal Affairs to inform Aboriginal-owned small businesses and entrepreneurs; and
- liaising with NSW Aboriginal Affairs to identify priority locations and events, to, where possible, include them into the schedule for the Small Biz Buses.

Recommendation 23: That the NSW Government review its lease/rent/licencing fees for land that includes visitor information centres and consider the reduction of fees to acknowledge the important role of these centres in enhancing the visitor economy.

Government Response: Not supported

Crown Lands has rent rebate arrangements for community facilities to recognise community outcomes. Currently there is a 50% rebate on market rent to councils for visitor information centres located on Crown Land. This level of rebate is equivalent to that provided for a range of other community facilities. Where appropriate, visitor economy facilities can apply for these discounts.

As a general principle, consistent with the Crown Lands Review, support for visitor economy initiatives should be targeted, transparent and evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

Recommendation 24: That Destination NSW include a surf safety message on its website.

Government Response: Supported (currently being implemented)

Destination NSW has developed surf safety information in collaboration with Surf Life Saving NSW. This information is now available on Destination NSW's consumer websites at:

<http://www.visitnsw.com/things-to-do/beaches-and-surf>

<http://www.sydney.com/things-to-do/beach-lifestyle/sydney-surf-beaches>

Both pages link to Surf Life Saving Australia's website: www.beachsafe.org.au, which provides extensive beach safety information and is available in multiple languages.

Recommendation 25: That the NSW Government review and report on current surf safety messages and their distribution throughout airlines, cruise ships and accommodation providers.

Government Response: Supported

In 2011, the NSW Government established the Water Safety Advisory Council (WSAC). The Council is chaired by the Ministry of Police & Emergency Services and comprises Government and industry experts in water safety. Destination NSW and NSW Trade & Investment attends the WSAC as required. The NSW Government has endorsed the Water Safety Strategy 2013-15 developed by the WSAC. The Strategy is available on the water safety website: www.watersafety.nsw.gov.au

Two specific initiatives under the Strategy include:

- developing and maintaining a centralised public safety program through coastal accommodation providers and tourism providers,
- monitoring and expanding interventions targeted at reducing drowning in tourists and international students.

Actions that will be implemented to support the initiatives include developing standardised beach/surf safety education programs for 75% of coastal accommodation providers located within one kilometre of the coast and with greater than 50 persons occupancy by 2018; ensuring standardised information developed by the WSAC is available at all city/regional airports, information kiosks, international students inductions; and continuing to work with Destination NSW and key industry stakeholders to share water safety messages.

Under the Strategy, the WSAC has developed consistent water safety messages, including surf safety messages. The messages will be published on all websites and media, and are expected to be approved for publication on the websites of government and water safety organisations by October 2014.