



Hornsby Shire Destination Management Plan 2026-2031

Adopted June 2026



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Acknowledgement of Country

We recognise the Traditional Owners of the lands of Hornsby Shire, the Dharug and GuriNgai peoples, and pay respect to their Ancestors and Elders past and present and to their Heritage. We acknowledge and uphold their intrinsic connections and continuing relationships to Country.

The Destination Vision

Hornsby Shire will be one of Greater Sydney's must-visit destinations, known for its diversity of authentic products and experiences which are intrinsically connected to the magnificent natural environment, rich rural hinterland and vibrant towns and villages.



Executive Summary

The Hornsby Shire Destination Management Plan 2026-2031 is an evidence-based strategy that guides Hornsby Shire Council, working with its partners in government, industry and the community, to support the vibrancy and sustainability of the Shire's visitor economy.

Hornsby Shire's visitor economy is growing – post pandemic, playing an increasingly important role in the development of its social, cultural and economic success. To guide future prosperity, the Hornsby Shire Destination Management Plan presents a considered plan of action with initiatives designed to enhance visitor experiences; attract more visitors to the Shire; grow visitors' average length of stay; increase visitor spend; and enhance the destination's profile nationally and internationally.

The initiatives presented in this Plan are built on Hornsby Shire's four key pillars of a vibrant visitor economy, anchored around **'experience tourism'** and reflecting growing consumer desires to connect authentically with local culture, community and the built and natural environments. Hornsby Shire's four pillars of a vibrant visitor economy are its **river** assets focussed on the Hawkesbury River and estuary; its **rural** character and landscape providing opportunities for health and wellness and agritourism; its **parks** and **bushland** setting defined by regional and national parks and trails; and its **towns and villages** that are well-connected, integrated with surrounding parklands and anchored by a diversity of retail activity, food and beverage offerings and a burgeoning night-time economy, as well as the arts, culture and creative industries.

Council's destination management planning objectives are underpinned by a set of place-based principles, which provide the organisation with operating guidelines to support the development of a vibrant visitor economy through the provision of readily-available and easy-to-access information for visitors; a clean, safe, accessible and welcoming destination; supporting infrastructure to enable visitation; activated and vibrant spaces and places; and collaborative partnerships that build identity and encourage visitation.

These place-based principles underpin Council's commitment to realising the vision, that ***Hornsby Shire will be one of Greater Sydney's must-visit destinations, known for its diversity of authentic products and experiences which are intrinsically connected to the magnificent natural environment, rich rural hinterland and vibrant towns and villages.***

Aligned with the NSW Government's Visitor Economy Strategy 2030, the guiding principles, destination pillars and initiatives presented in this Plan will realise the vision by guiding decision-making in three focus areas that:

- 1) Build the Hornsby Brand;**
- 2) Facilitate the Growth of Our Visitor Economy; and**
- 3) Showcase Our Destination's Strengths.**

To ensure effective outcomes, Hornsby Shire Council, working across the organisation and in collaboration with other destination stakeholders, will continually monitor, assess and report on the implementation of the actions in this Plan and the achievement of key milestones. Implementation progress will be reviewed annually to ensure that priorities reflect current needs and expectations for the future. Aligned with the *Hornsby Shire Community Strategic Plan, Economic Development and Tourism Strategy 2021-2026* and other key strategies, the Plan's progress will be used to inform ongoing operational planning and delivery.



1. The Hornsby Shire Destination Management Plan

Destination Management Plan Purpose and Objectives

The Hornsby Shire Destination Management Plan 2026-2031 is Hornsby Shire Council's statement of intent to manage the destination, with a clear vision and plan of action to grow the Shire's visitor economy.

Hornsby Shire's visitor economy comprises businesses that provide goods and services to international and domestic visitors on day or overnight trips. These include cafes, restaurants and take-away food and beverage businesses, retailers, transport service and accommodation providers, arts, recreation, leisure and entertainment service providers and tour operators.

Hornsby Shire's visitor economy is growing post pandemic - playing an increasingly important role in the development of its social, cultural and economic success. To guide future prosperity, this Plan presents a suite of initiatives designed to enhance visitor experiences; attract more visitors to the Shire; grow visitors' average length of stay; increase visitor spend; and enhance the destination's profile nationally and internationally.

Hornsby Shire Council gets directly involved in tourism through its role in providing visitor information services, in marketing and promotion, infrastructure provision (including sporting, nature-based recreational and cultural facilities), planning, place activation and regulation, destination management, and industry support and development.

Informed by a set of place-based planning principles and aligned with the NSW Government's Visitor Economy Strategy 2030, this Plan guides Council decision-making across three strategic focus areas that are designed to:

- 1) Build the Hornsby Brand;**
- 2) Facilitate the Growth of Our Visitor Economy; and**
- 3) Showcase Our Destination's Strengths.**

Through these focus areas, the Hornsby Shire Destination Management Plan delivers a suite of initiatives to capitalise on the destination's comparative advantages as well as developing attractions to capture new, high-end, high value visitor markets.

The Destination

Strategically located in Sydney's metropolitan north, Hornsby Shire is well-connected to the city, bush, river and other recreation, leisure and entertainment opportunities. A destination for around 1.4 million visitors annually, the Shire's tourism sector is worth around \$460 million per year with its visitor market spanning holiday-makers, education or business travellers and those visiting friends and relatives - both domestic and international - as well as the businesses that serve them.

Known as the 'Bushland Shire', Hornsby Shire includes land from North Epping in the south to Wisemans Ferry in the north and Brooklyn in the east and includes 38 suburbs and rural localities. With national parks and nature reserves covering more than two-thirds of its area, the Shire is a popular destination for bush walking, camping, picnics, boating, canoeing, horse riding, mountain biking, road cycling and fishing. Hornsby Shire also hosts a large number of events throughout the year, from music, food and art festivals to sporting events and guided bush walks.

From the natural beauty of the Ku-ring-gai Chase National Park and the bountiful waters of the Hawkesbury River, to the Shire's inviting towns and villages and the bustling hub of the Hornsby town centre, Hornsby Shire offers something for everyone. Iconic destination assets include the 250-kilometre Great North Walk, which traverses Hornsby Shire, major investment in the Hornsby Quarry project (Hornsby Park), as well as the Hawkesbury River and estuaries. With a rich Indigenous history, cultural attractions, a diverse population of welcoming locals, quality cafes and restaurants, lush parks and gardens and stunning bushland, Hornsby Shire is a destination where the beauty of the natural world combine with the vibrancy of human activity.

Through this Plan, Hornsby Shire Council will continually work in partnership with the destination's other key stakeholders to promote and support the Shire as a 'must-visit' destination defined by a diversity of authentic experiences built on its natural features, iconic attractions, and its recreational, heritage and cultural assets.

The Plan includes initiatives to support development of key assets by building defined products and experiences that will attract a greater number of domestic and international visitors, including high-yield travellers who value the landscape they are visiting and who seek to immerse themselves for extended periods in high-quality experiences. Ultimately, this will add value to the destination's offer, presenting a viable pathway to building tourism as a driver of the Hornsby Shire economy.

2. Tourism Drivers and Hornsby Shire's Destination Pillars

Tourism Drivers

Taking its lead from the NSW Visitor Economic Strategy 2030 and recognising Hornsby Shire Council's predominantly place-based role as an enabler and promoter of tourism growth and development, this Hornsby Shire Destination Management Plan presents a number of initiatives focussed on nurturing and promoting the Shire's compelling visitor experiences.

Council's place-based approach to destination management planning responds to evolving visitor preferences and visitation trends, which are influencing the prospects for tourism development and the ways in which Hornsby Shire, as a destination, can respond. Research shows that these key trends and influences include:

- **Experiential travel** - travellers are increasingly seeking immersive, informative educational experiences that are unique to the places they visit. The desire for authentic experiences is driving demand for exploring destinations that offer something different.
- **Sustainable travel** - sustainable and conscious travel will continue to gain momentum; growing awareness of 'over tourism' means that destinations need to identify ways to manage this in the interests of their economy, the environment and their communities.
- **Holidays with a purpose** - volunteering, understanding and caring for the environment and authentic engagement with communities, including First Nations, will play a bigger part in travel and destination choice.
- **Wellness travel** - travel for the purpose of wellness, both spiritual and physical, to activate the mind and body, will continue to grow in popularity.
- **Accessible tourism** - this fast-growing sector accounts for an increasing share of tourism revenue in New South Wales. An increasing number of people 65 and over who are keen travellers may also have accessibility needs.
- **Food and beverage tourism** - local produce and food and drink experiences are influencing destination choice, as a central part of the travel experience.
- **Business events tourism** - conventions, corporate meetings and retreats, seminars and sales incentive rewards trips all hold promise for growth in Australia's visitor destinations.

Hornsby Shire's Destination Pillars

The strategic focus areas and actions presented in this Destination Management Plan are built on Hornsby Shire's four key pillars of a vibrant visitor economy, anchored around **'experience tourism'** and reflecting growing consumer desires to connect authentically with local culture, community and the built and natural environments.

Hornsby Shire's four pillars of a vibrant visitor economy are its **river** assets focussed on the Hawkesbury River and estuary; its **rural** character and landscape providing opportunities for health and wellness and agritourism; its **parks and bushland** setting defined by regional and national parks and trails; and its **towns and villages** that are well-connected, integrated with surrounding parklands and anchored by a diversity of retail activity, food and beverage offerings and a burgeoning night-time economy, as well as the arts, culture and creative industries.

Hornsby Shire's Destination Pillars



These pillars define the destination 'offer' and provide the basis for destination management planning built on Hornsby Shire's comparative and competitive advantages.



3. Destination Snapshot

The Hornsby Shire Visitor Economy

The visitor economy spans those traveling for holidays, education or business and those visiting friends and relatives – both domestic and international – as well as the businesses and destinations that serve them.

Hornsby Shire’s visitor economy comprises businesses that provide goods and services to international and domestic visitors on day or overnight trips. These include cafes, restaurants and take-away food and beverage businesses, retailers, transport service providers, accommodation providers, arts, recreation, leisure and entertainment service providers and tour operators.

According to Tourism Research Australia (TRA), in 2023/24, the tourism sector accounted for 7.2% of Hornsby Shire’s total industry value-added compared to 7.9% for NSW and 7.1% for Australia. Providing for around 4,000 local jobs (source: economy.id), tourism accounts for 7.8% of Hornsby Shire’s total employment compared to 8.8% for NSW and 9.1% for Australia. Hornsby Shire’s ‘tourism workforce’ includes kitchenhands (18%), waiters (15%), chefs (11%), cafe/restaurant managers (9%), baristas (7%), café workers (7%) and bar attendants (7%).

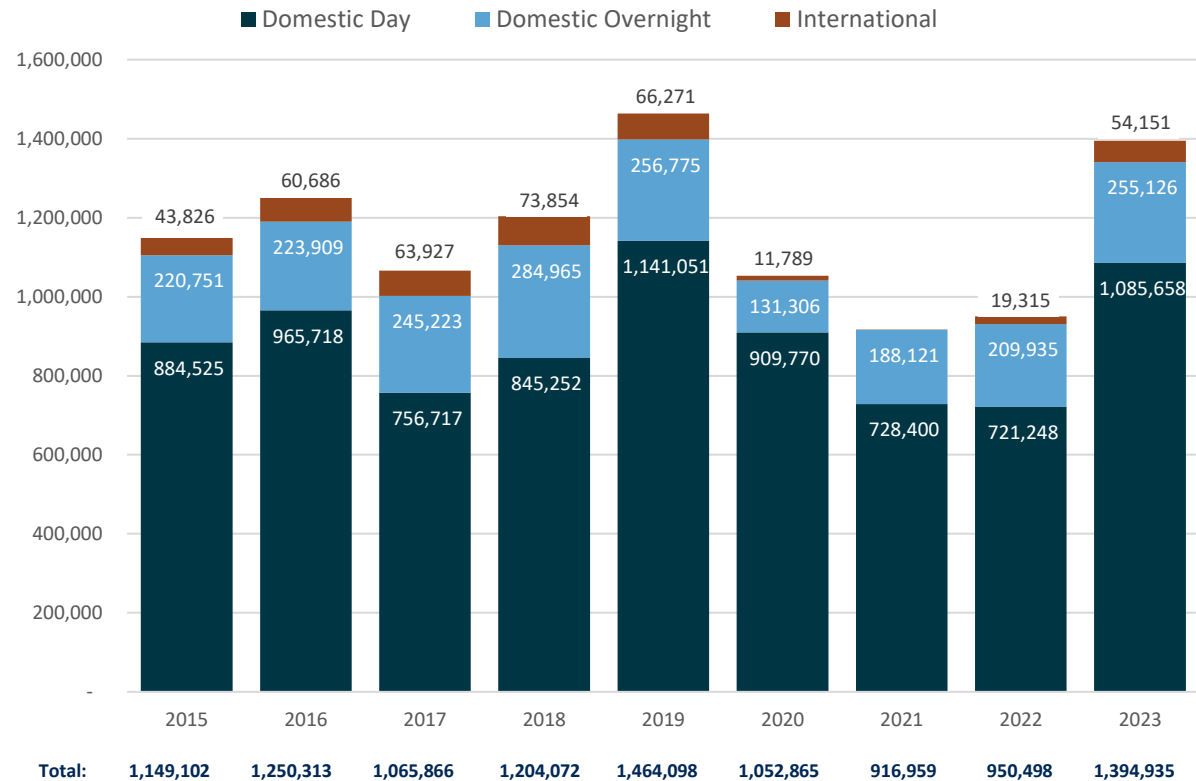
Visitation Profile and Trends

The latest available (2023) data shows that domestic day-trippers account for the largest share of visitation to Hornsby Shire (78%) followed by domestic overnight visitors (18%) and internationals (just 4% of total visitation). According to TRA, the number of visitors to Hornsby Shire fell at an average annual rate of 2.5% over the eight-year period between 2015 and 2023. This can be attributed to the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic on both domestic and international travel.

Between 2015 and 2019, total visitation to Hornsby Shire grew strongly at an average annual rate of 6.2%, from 1.15 million to 1.46 million visitors. Before the impacts of the pandemic took hold on global travel, international visitation to Hornsby Shire was on a strong growth trajectory, up 11% per annum between 2015 and 2019, albeit from a small base.

While the effects of the pandemic had a severe impact on levels of visitation to Hornsby Shire (as elsewhere), since 2021 a strong recovery has been evident in the increased number of people travelling to the area, up 52% from 2021 to 2023.

Visitation to Hornsby Shire, 2015-2023



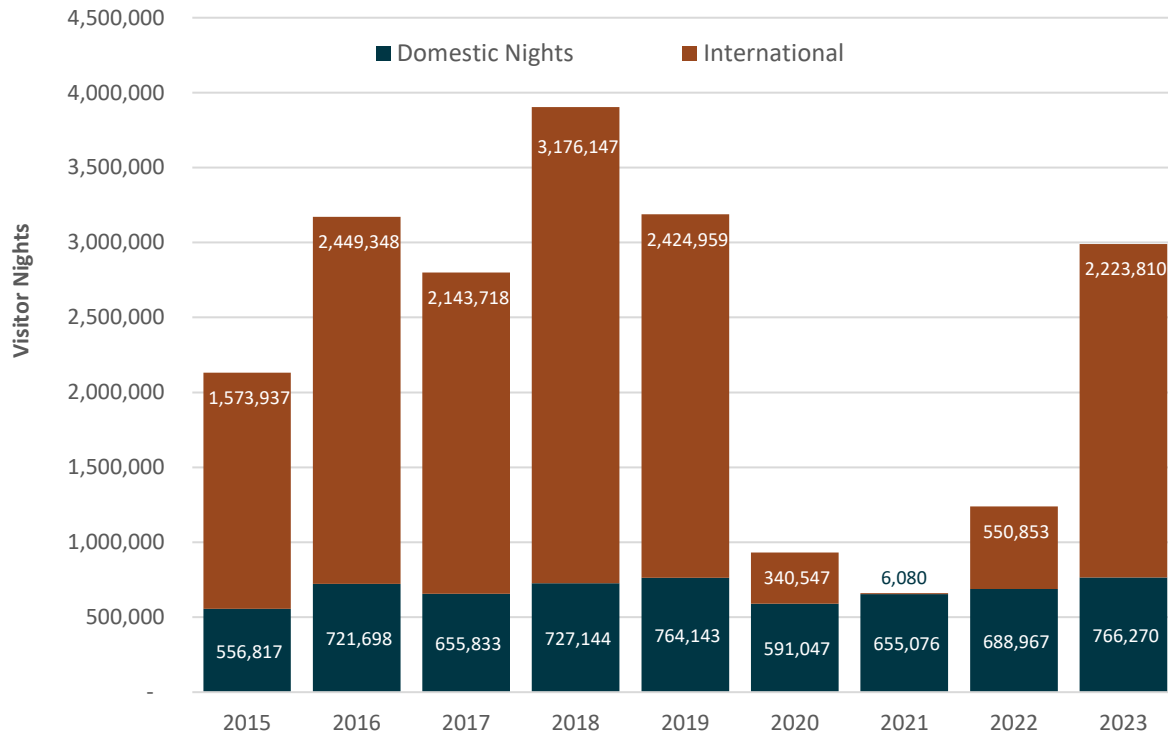
Source: Tourism Research Australia with interpretations by SC Lennon & Associates

Destination Snapshot

Visitor Nights and Length of Stay

Visitor nights to Hornsby Shire are driven by international visitors who, in 2023, accounted for 74% of all nights in the Shire. This is underpinned by the average length of stay of international visitors, of 29 days (in 2022) compared to 3 days on average for domestic overnight visitors. International visitor nights increased by 11% per annum between 2015 and 2019, while domestic visitor nights increased by 8% per annum over the same period.

Visitor Nights to Hornsby Shire, 2015-2023

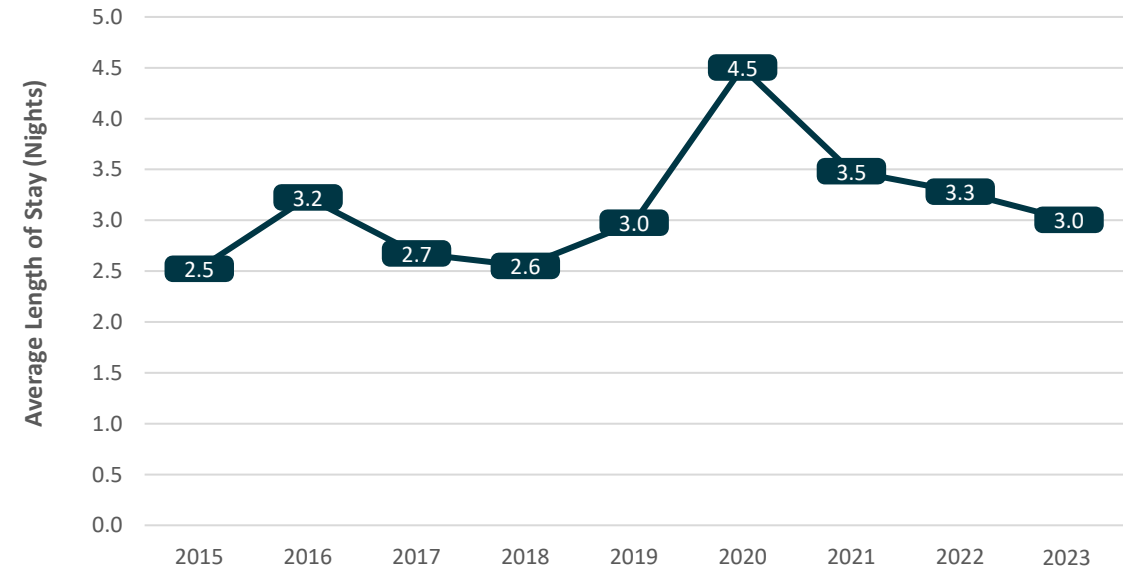


Source: Tourism Research Australia with interpretations by SC Lennon & Associates

Average length of stay for international visitors remained stable between 2015 and 2019, at between 36 and 37 nights. While international visitors' average length of stay fell considerably after 2020, it has since begun to recover, while the average length of stay of domestic overnight visitors increased following the Covid-19 pandemic.

While visitor nights fell by 71% following the pandemic (2020), by 2023, total visitor nights in Hornsby Shire were above the pre-pandemic levels. In 2023, domestic overnight visitors to Hornsby Shire were at 92% of pre-pandemic numbers, while by 2023 the number of international visitors to Hornsby Shire exceeded pre-pandemic levels.

Average Length of Stay, Domestic Overnight Visitors to Hornsby Shire, 2015-2023



Source: Tourism Research Australia with interpretations by SC Lennon & Associates

Destination Snapshot

Reasons for Visits to Hornsby Shire

Visitation to Hornsby Shire is made up of domestic day-trippers, domestic overnight visitors (those who stay for more than one day) and international visitors.

Reasons for visitation to any destination, broadly defined, include for holidays, for business purposes and to visit friends and relatives.

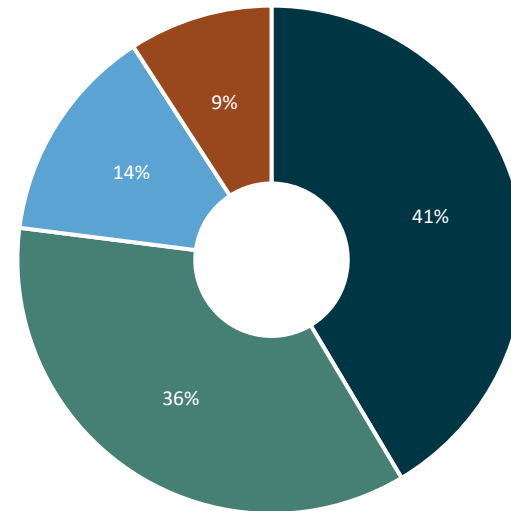
According to Tourism Research Australia, for both domestic day trippers and domestic overnight visitors to Hornsby Shire, visiting friends and relatives accounted for the largest share of their reason to visit.

Holidays accounted for the second most commonly-cited reason for visiting Hornsby Shire, though for domestic day-trippers, this accounted for a larger share of the total (41%) compared to domestic overnight visitors (21%).

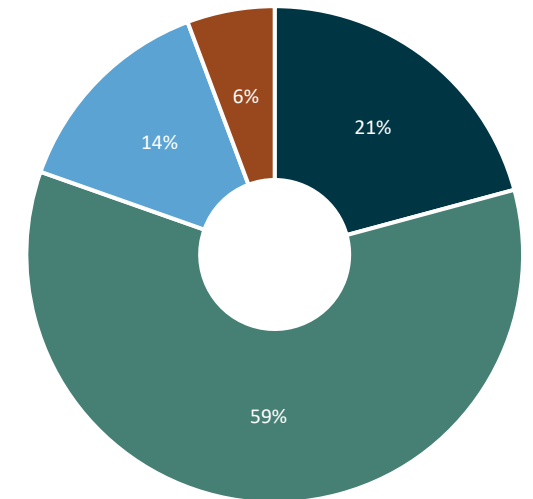
Business travel and travelling for other reasons accounted for a similar share of the total for both domestic day-trippers and domestic overnight visitors to Hornsby Shire.

Reason for Visit to Hornsby Shire, Domestic Day and Overnight Visitors (Average 2017-2019*)

Domestic Day Trippers



Domestic Overnight Visitors



- Holiday
- Visiting friends and relatives
- Business
- Other reason

* Note: The destination has been profiled using pre-Covid data (averages from 2017-2019) as this more accurately represents its true performance given the significant impact of the pandemic during 2020-2022.

Source: Tourism Research Australia with interpretations by SC Lennon & Associates

Destination Snapshot

Source Markets, Domestic Visitors

The large majority (70%) of domestic day-trippers to Hornsby Shire come from the Greater Sydney area. Another 18% of domestic day trip visitors come from the nearby Central Coast.

Almost two-thirds of domestic overnight visitors to Hornsby Shire (62%) come from New South Wales.

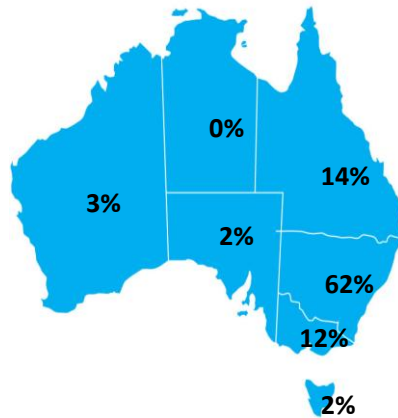
From within NSW, 28% of Hornsby Shire's domestic overnight visitors travel from Sydney, 18% come from the Hunter region, 13% from the NSW North Coast and 11% from the Central Coast.

After NSW, the largest source state of domestic overnight visitors to Hornsby Shire is Queensland, contributing 14%, followed closely by Victoria at 12%.

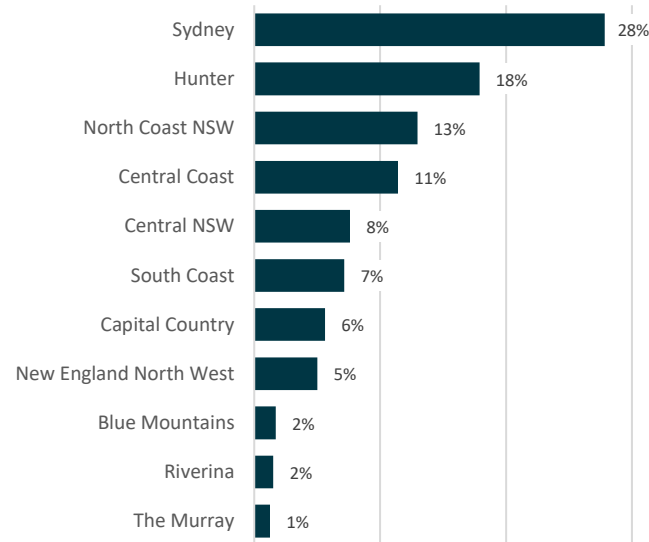
For international visitors to Hornsby Shire, the largest source market is China, which accounts for almost one-quarter (23%) of all visitors. By comparison, China is the source market for 19% of all international visitors to Greater Sydney.

Other key source markets include New Zealand (11%), India (9%), the United Kingdom (8%) and the USA (6% of international visitors to Hornsby Shire).

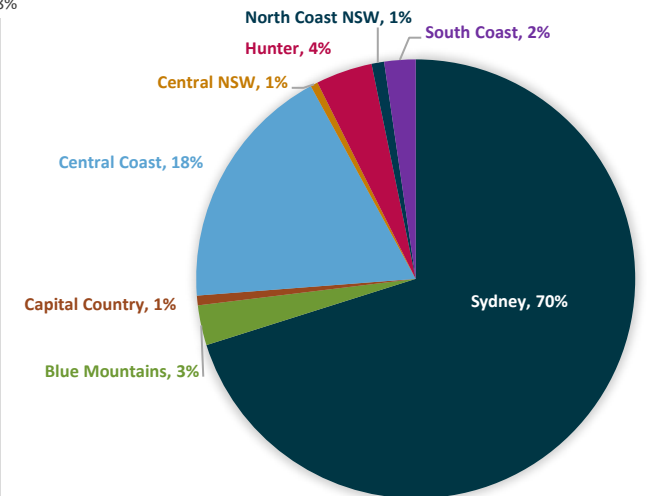
Source Markets, Domestic Day Trip and Overnight Visitors to Hornsby Shire (Average 2017-2019*)



Domestic Overnight Visitors



Domestic Day Trip Visitors



* Note: The destination has been profiled using pre-Covid data (averages from 2017-2019) as this more accurately represents its true performance given the significant impact of the pandemic during 2020-2022.

Source: Tourism Research Australia with interpretations by SC Lennon & Associates

Destination Snapshot

Visitor Activities

Social activities (e.g. eating out, sightseeing, going to pubs/clubs and shopping) account for the largest share of activities undertaken by both domestic day trippers and domestic overnight visitors to Hornsby Shire.

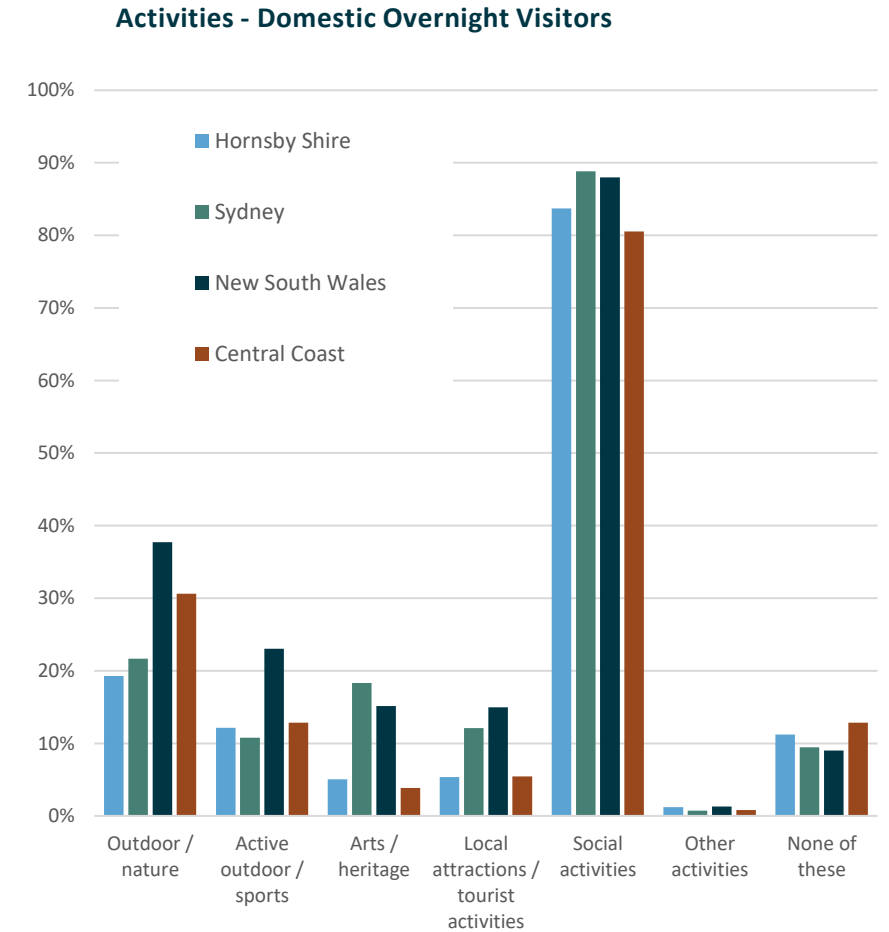
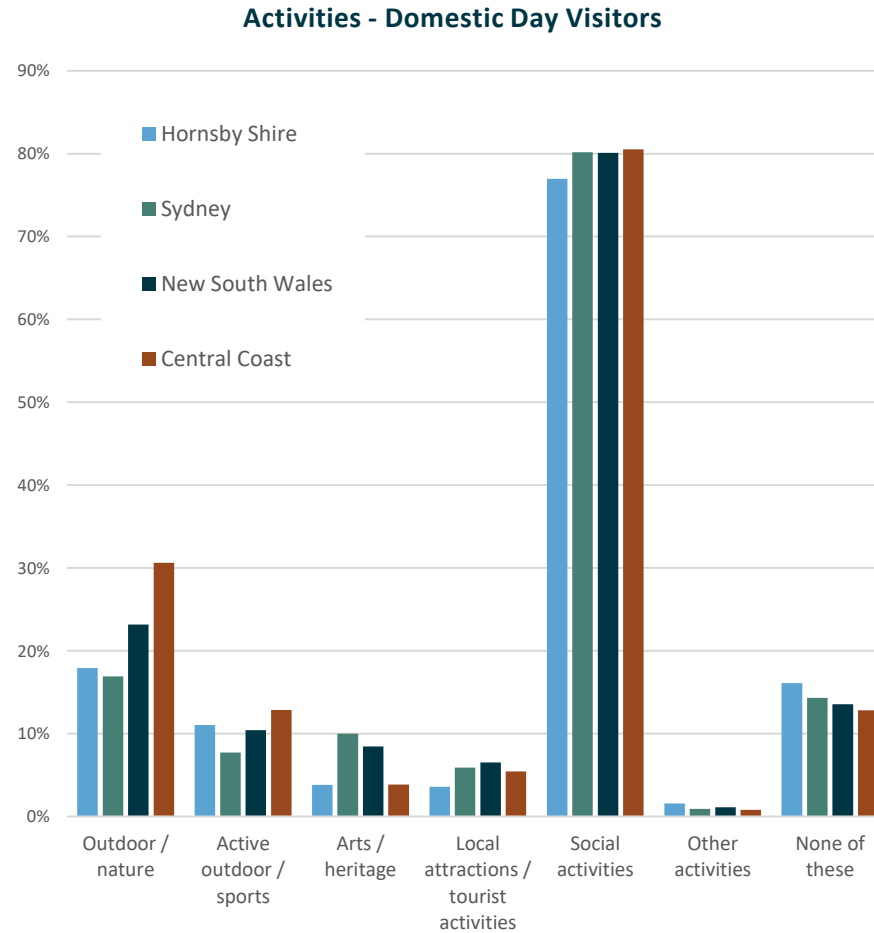
The proportion of domestic day visitors to Hornsby Shire who participated in social activities was lower than for Sydney, NSW or the neighbouring Central Coast.

However, for domestic overnight visitors, a slightly higher proportion spent time undertaking social activities compared to the Central Coast.

A relatively high proportion of domestic day-trip visitors to Hornsby Shire participated in active outdoor/sports activities such as an organised sporting event (11% compared to 8% for Sydney and 10% for NSW).

Outdoor/nature activities such as bushwalking or visiting national/state parks also accounted for a large share of both domestic day-tripper and overnight visitor activities in Hornsby Shire.

Visitor Activities, Hornsby Shire and Comparative Regions (Average 2017-2019*)



* Note: The destination has been profiled using pre-Covid data as this more accurately represents its true performance given the significant impact of the pandemic during 2020-2022.

Source: Tourism Research Australia with interpretations by SC Lennon & Associates

Destination Snapshot

Destination Snapshot in Summary

Some key observations from the assessment of the data on visitation to Hornsby Shire include:

- Providing for around 8,000 local jobs, tourism accounts for 7.8% of Hornsby Shire's total employment (compared to 8.8% for NSW and 9.1% for Australia) and 7.2% of the Shire's industry value-added (compared to 7.9% for NSW and 7.1% for Australia).
- Hornsby Shire's **'tourism workforce'** includes kitchenhands (18%), waiters (15%), chefs (11%), cafe/restaurant managers (9%), baristas (7%), café workers (7%) and bar attendants (7%).
- **Pre-pandemic, between 2015 and 2019, visitation to Hornsby Shire grew strongly** at an average annual rate of 6.2%, from 1.15 million to 1.46 million visitors.
- **Visitation to Hornsby Shire fell** at an average annual rate of 2.5% between 2015 and 2023. This can be attributed to the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic on both domestic and international travel. Since the end of the pandemic, visitation to Hornsby Shire has rebounded strongly.
- While the effects of the pandemic had a severe impact on levels of visitation to Hornsby Shire, since 2021, **a recovery has been evident** in the increased number of people travelling to the area, up 52% from 2021 to 2023.
- During the Covid pandemic, Hornsby Shire's share of total visitation to Greater Sydney increased before declining at the end of the pandemic (2022) to levels slightly below those observed in 2019.
- The latest available (2023) data reveals that **domestic day-trippers** account for approximately three-quarters (78%) of visitation to Hornsby Shire followed by domestic overnight visitors (18%) and internationals (just 4% of total visitation).
- Although a small proportion of total visits, **visitor nights to Hornsby Shire are driven by internationals** who, in 2023, accounted for 74% of all visitor nights in the Shire. For international visitors to Hornsby Shire, the largest source market is China, which accounts for approximately one-quarter of all international visitors.
- **The large majority (70%) of domestic day-trippers to Hornsby Shire come from the Greater Sydney area.** Another 18% of domestic day trip visitors come from the nearby Central Coast. Almost two-thirds of domestic overnight visitors to Hornsby Shire (62%) come from New South Wales. Of those, 28% travel from Sydney, 18% come from the Hunter region, 13% from the NSW North Coast and 11% from the Central Coast.
- For both domestic day trippers and domestic overnight visitors to Hornsby Shire, **visiting friends and relatives accounted for the largest share of their reason to visit.** Holidays accounted for the second most commonly-cited reason, though for domestic day-trippers, holidays accounted for a larger share of the total (41%) compared to domestic overnight visitors (21%).
- **Social activities** (e.g. eating out, sightseeing, going to pubs/clubs and shopping) account for the largest share of activities undertaken by both domestic day trippers and domestic overnight visitors to Hornsby Shire.
- A relatively high proportion of domestic day-trip visitors to Hornsby Shire participated in **active outdoor/sports activities** (11% compared to 8% for Sydney and 10% for NSW). **Outdoor/nature activities** (e.g. bushwalking, visiting national/state parks) also accounted for a large share of both domestic day-tripper and overnight visitor activities in Hornsby Shire.

4. Destination Attributes, Challenges and Opportunities

Understanding the attributes, challenges and opportunities to realise aspirations for a vibrant Hornsby Shire visitor economy drives the development of the DMP's focus areas and actions. In summary, they include:

Feature	Attributes	Challenges	Opportunities
Destination Offer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connected to the city, the bush, rural areas and the river. • 'Hero assets' - Hawkesbury River and estuaries, Great North Walk. • Three Gorges Ride (Bobbin Head, Berowra Waters, Galston Gorge). • Cultural heritage, including First Nations. • Mountain biking at Hornsby Park. • Farmgate and agri-tourism. • Diversity of towns and villages, parks and gardens. • Nature-based experiences (National Parks, bushland). • Water-based activities (e.g. Brooklyn, Berowra Waters, Wisemans Ferry). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Competing with alternative regional destinations. • Hawkesbury River access and place activation (regulatory and environmental constraints). • Town centre activation. • Car parking. • Wayfinding and heritage interpretation. • Destination brand articulation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First Nations cultural tourism. • Wellness tourism. • Adventure tourism. • History and heritage (e.g. Wisemans Ferry). • Greater destination awareness amongst residents. • The Hornsby brand. • Events to activate spaces and places (e.g. movie nights, markets). • Geo-trails and Hornsby Diatrema, Hornsby Park. • Hornsby Town Centre activation.
Visitor Markets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong day-trip market. • Domestic holiday market is strong. • Outdoor recreation and camping. • Social activities are popular with visitors. • Business travel market small but stable. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demand for experiences is changing (more sophisticated). • Increase in domestic travel. • Visitation is rebounding post-Covid. • Limited night-time activities. • Limited digital reach. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote the destination offer with nature, culture and food. • Attract and retain active and health-conscious visitors. • Culturally-diverse and inclusive tourism. • Articulate Hornsby Shire's eco-tourism credentials. • Business tourism / events. • Attract more international visitors. • Increase visitors' length of stay (and spend). • Experiences with a purpose.
Tourism Product	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • River-based experiences (e.g. Riverboat Postman). • Nature-based experiences (e.g. Great North Walk, mountain biking). • Catalyst project investment (Hornsby Park). • Cultural attractions. • Boutique visitor accommodation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wider market awareness of tourism product/experiences. • Night-time economy under-developed. • Scope to better define food and beverage offering. • Catalyst project plans (e.g. Hornsby Park). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Riverside and rural activations. • Grow the night-time economy. • Arts and creative industries (e.g. music, visual arts). • Food and beverage branding; agritourism (e.g. pick your own). • Leverage existing events (e.g. Hawkesbury Harvest). • Package commissionable nature-based product (e.g. canoeing, mountain biking, road biking, trail running, bird-watching). • Inn-to-inn-style walks. • Digital itinerary planning and promotion.
Enabling Infrastructure and Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Well connected by road, rail and air. • Quality cycling and walking infrastructure. • On the Great North Walk. • Camping facilities. • Boutique visitor accommodation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scope for some signage improvements. • Infrastructure to enable water-based recreation. • Evolving visitor information needs (physical and digital). • Online presence and branding (web, social media). • Demand for greater diversity of accommodation. • Demand for small business support services. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater diversity of short-stay accommodation. • Interpretive signage and media. • Enhanced online and in-person visitor information delivery. • Leverage NSW First to deliver tourism operator (business) support. • Leverage Australian Tourism Data Warehouse to promote the Shire and support tourism operators.

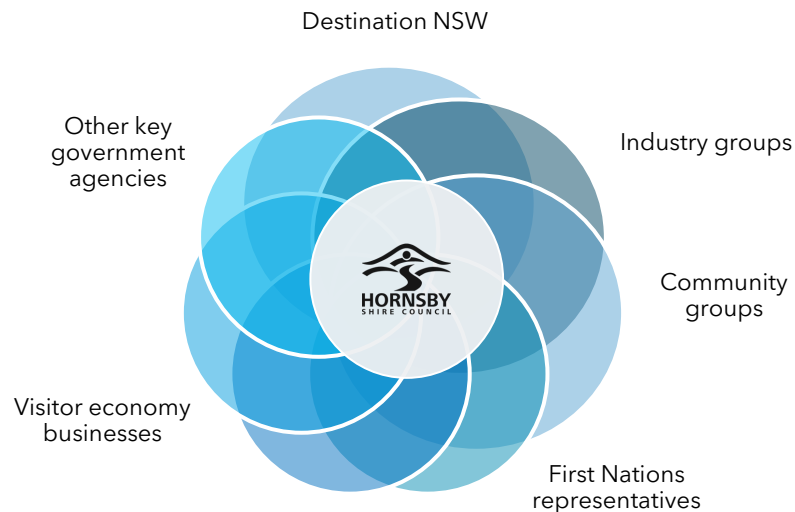
5. Destination Management Planning Partnerships and Strategic Alignment

Collaborative Partnerships

Hornsby Shire Council's commitment to destination management planning does not occur in isolation. Key to the growth of a vibrant visitor economy is the development of close connections between departments within Council as well as strong relationships with the Shire's other destination stakeholders.

Through the implementation of this Destination Management Plan, effective tourism promotion and development will be served by collaborative partnerships between Hornsby Shire Council, Destination NSW, industry partners and the communities of Hornsby Shire, to increase the visitor economy's contribution to sustainable economic development.

The Destination Management Plan aligns with key pillars of the NSW Government's Visitor Economy Strategy 2030, with a focus on building the Hornsby brand, showcasing the destination's strengths and facilitating the sustainable growth of the Shire's visitor economy.



Aligning the Destination's Strategic Planning Priorities

As well as aligning with the strategic pillars of the NSW Government's Visitor Economy Strategy 2030, the Hornsby Shire Destination Management Plan aligns with other key Council plans and policies.





6. Destination Vision and Guiding Principles

The Destination Vision

Hornsby Shire will be one of Greater Sydney's must-visit destinations, known for its diversity of authentic products and experiences which are intrinsically connected to the magnificent natural environment, rich rural hinterland and vibrant towns and villages.

The vision reflects Council's strategic objectives, to enhance visitor experiences; grow visitation and visitors' average length of stay; increase visitor spend; and enhance Hornsby Shire's profile as a visitor destination nationally and internationally.

Guiding Principles

The initiatives presented under each focus area align with one or more of the destination pillars and are informed by a set of place-based principles, which reflect the roles and functions of Hornsby Shire Council as the custodian of this Destination Management Plan.

The principles, which provide Council with some operating guidelines to continually work towards realisation of the destination vision, are:

- **Readily-available and easy-to-access information** - ensure effective visitor information management and delivery so people know how to get here and where to have a great experience.
- **A clean, safe, accessible and welcoming destination** - ensure Hornsby Shire, as a destination, is clean, safe, and easy to get to, and is welcoming and enjoyable to spend time in.
- **Supporting infrastructure to enable visitation** - enable a vibrant visitor economy through the provision of infrastructure and services.
- **Activated and vibrant spaces and places** - make our streets and public spaces great - bursting with flavour, colourful and filled with diverse culture.
- **Collaborative partnerships that build identity and encourage visitation** - build a shared commitment to growing a vibrant visitor economy through collaborative partnerships.

Guiding Principles for Destination Management Planning



7. Focus Areas and Action Plan

Strategic Focus Areas

The aspirations, attributes, challenges and opportunities for developing Hornsby Shire’s visitor economy inform a number of key destination management planning initiatives.

Aligned with the strategic pillars of the NSW Government’s Visitor Economy Strategy 2030 and its renewed aspirations as articulated in the Visitor Economy Strategy 2030 Review, these actions are designed to realise the vision for Hornsby Shire as a must-visit destination.

A suite of actions are presented across the following three strategic focus areas:

- 1) **Build the Hornsby Brand**
- 2) **Facilitate the Growth of Our Visitor Economy**
- 3) **Showcase Our Destination’s Strengths**

Implementation Guidance

The action plan is presented in the following pages. For each action, implementation partners are identified and indicative timing is assigned according to whether the action is a short-term priority (1-2 years), medium-term priority (3-5 years) or a longer-term initiative (5+ years). Ongoing or once-off actions are nominated as such.

Whilst all actions are not funded, a short-term measure indicates that an action should be taken sooner rather than later, should funding and/or resourcing be available or prioritised.

Indicative project costs:

- \$ - within existing budgets and resources
- \$\$ - up to \$100,000
- \$\$\$ - \$100,000 +

Where additional staffing is required, this is nominated both by “Cost” (\$\$\$) and in the “Evaluation Method” column.

Strategic Focus Areas for Destination Management Planning



Focus Area 1: Build the Hornsby Brand



Focus Area 1: Build the Hornsby Brand

Build the Hornsby Brand								
No.	Item	Action	Destination Pillar	Council Role/Partners	Cost	Priority	Business Unit(s)	Evaluation Method
1.1	Strategic alignment	Align with NSW Destination Themes with a focus on experience tourism, especially first light (early morning), First Nations and wellness tourism.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Towns and Villages Rural River Parks and Bushland 	DNSW	\$	Ongoing	Strategy and Place	N/A
1.2	Whole-of-Council place-based destination management planning	Collaborate across Council Business Units to deliver a place-based, whole-of-organisation approach to destination management planning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Towns and Villages Rural River Parks and Bushland 	Internal Council action	\$	Ongoing	All	Place-based planning documents adopted and implemented
1.3	Brand Hornsby	Develop an authentic brand identity and visual assets to align with the destination pillars for Hornsby Shire, to transition from liveable to loveable; promote positive awareness, grow the visitor economy and attract investment and talent.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Towns and Villages Rural River Parks and Bushland 	Planning and promoting - Council will develop and own the brand in consultation with stakeholders if funded	\$	Short	Strategy and Place	Brand established and reviewed 2 years via a brand recognition survey
1.4	Discover Hornsby website update	Refresh website content and digital assets to align with the destination pillars and new brand Hornsby to showcase the destination's unique people, places, culture, experiences and products, with a focus on the Hornsby town centre.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Towns and Villages Rural River Parks and Bushland 	Council lead with industry partners if funded	\$	Short	Strategy and Place	Site updated; annual site visitation monitored and reviewed - linked to key outcome measures
1.5	Discover Hornsby website marketing	Investigate and implement a marketing campaign to increase overall destination awareness and appeal of Hornsby Shire to grow the visitor economy (following preparation of itineraries).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Towns and Villages Rural River Parks and Bushland 	Council lead with industry partners if funded	\$	Medium	Strategy and Place	Campaign delivered and reviewed

Focus Area 1: Build the Hornsby Brand

Build the Hornsby Brand								
No.	Item	Action	Destination Pillar	Council Role/Partners	Cost	Priority	Business Unit(s)	Evaluation Method
1.6	Marketing Approach	Resolve an approach to marketing Hornsby Shire's destination pillars in consultation with industry stakeholders; link to and leverage DNSW's promotion in key visitor markets.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Towns and Villages Rural River Parks and Bushland 	Council lead with industry partners if funded	\$	Short	Strategy and Place	Marketing plan delivered and reviewed as required
1.7	Activation Strategy	Complete a review of Council's activation and event program and realign its delivery to reflect the destination pillars, with a focus on Hornsby Town Centre and Hornsby Park to maximise the benefits of visitation.	Towns and Villages	Internal Council action	\$\$ unbudgeted	Short	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategy and Place Library and Community 	Activation Strategy adopted and implemented
1.8	Activation Toolkit	Undertake a review of barriers and develop a toolkit which will increase opportunities for community-driven and/or third-party activations on Council managed land.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Towns and Villages Parks and Bushland 	Internal Council action	\$\$ unbudgeted	Short	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategy and Place Library and Community 	Barriers removed where possible, active 'courting' of community and commercial event providers
1.9	Night-time Economy Strategy	Develop a night-time economy strategy for Hornsby Shire with a focus on the Hornsby Town Centre.	Towns and Villages	Office of the 24-Hour Economy Commissioner	\$	Short	Strategy and Place	Night-time Economy Strategy adopted, resourced and KPIs monitored and reviewed

Focus Area 2: Facilitate the Growth of Our Visitor Economy



Focus Area 2: Facilitate the Growth of Our Visitor Economy

Facilitate the Growth of Our Visitor Economy								
No.	Item	Action	Destination Pillar	Council Role/Partners	Cost	Priority	Business Unit(s)	Evaluation Method
2.1	Industry Development	Support industry development and capacity building via referrals to NSW First, the Australian Tourism Data Warehouse (ATWD) and DNSW.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Towns and Villages Rural River Parks and Bushland 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DNSW ATDW Industry 	\$\$\$ - Unfunded	N/A	N/A	Requires employment of new staffing resource
2.2	Industry Working Group	Investigate and consider the establishment of a working group for an industry-led (project based) network to drive DMP actions with working streams to align with the destination pillars.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Towns and Villages Rural River Parks and Bushland 	Industry	\$\$\$ - Unfunded	N/A	N/A	Requires employment of new staffing resource
2.3	Community Improvement Districts	Investigate the opportunity to establish a Community Improvement District (CID) under recent State legislation to support and grow the Shire's town centres, main streets and local economies.	Towns and Villages	Transport for NSW	\$	Medium	Strategy and Place	CID established and funded
2.4	Parking	Review current policy to ensure that parking is managed at key destinations to facilitate access and maximise economic outcomes, including the provision of EV charging infrastructure.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Towns and Villages Rural River Parks and Bushland 	Internal Council action	\$	Short	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Infrastructure Planning Strategy and Place 	Parking policy adopted, funded and implemented

Focus Area 2: Facilitate the Growth of Our Visitor Economy

Facilitate the Growth of Our Visitor Economy								
No.	Item	Action	Destination Pillar	Council Role/Partners	Cost	Priority	Business Unit(s)	Evaluation Method
2.6	Place Plans	Audit Hornsby Shire's town and village centres and identify a priority program for public domain improvements that will increase amenity and appeal to the visitor economy.	Towns and Villages	Internal Council action	\$	Long	Strategy and Place	Place plans developed, adopted and implemented via Council's Delivery Program and Operational Plan
2.7	Foreshore Asset Management Strategy	Incorporate a Foreshore Asset Management Strategy into Council's Asset Management Strategy and develop a Foreshore Asset Management Plan to inform the regional Hawkesbury-Nepean River Maritime Infrastructure Strategy.	River	Internal Council action	\$\$ - unfunded	Medium	Infrastructure Planning	Strategy adopted by Council and implemented via Delivery Program and Operational Plan
2.8	Bush Walking Tracks and Mountain Bike Trails	Review supporting infrastructure needed to facilitate the development of bush walking tracks and mountain bike trails in Hornsby Shire.	Parks and Bushland	Internal Council action	\$	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Environment Infrastructure Planning 	Infrastructure needs formally considered by Council
2.9	Parks Infrastructure	Review future infrastructure improvements at key destination parks across the Shire to diversify the visitor experience and attract new visitors.	Parks and Bushland	Internal Council action	\$\$ - Unfunded	Long	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategy and Place Community and Environment Parks, Trees and Recreation 	Infrastructure needs formally considered by Council
2.10	Commerical Opportunities	Review commercial opportunities at key destination parks across the Shire to improve and diversify the visitor experience and attract new visitors.	Parks and Bushland	Internal Council action	\$\$\$ - unfunded	Long	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategy and Place Property Parks, Trees and Recreation Community and Environment 	Report provided for Council's consideration
2.11	Outdoor Sports	Review potential incentives for sports groups to host regional sports events.	Parks and Bushland	Internal Council action	\$ - Existing staff resource	Medium	Parks, Trees and Recreation	Report provided for Council's consideration

Focus Area 3: Showcase Our Destination's Strengths



Focus Area 3: Showcase Our Destination's Strengths

Showcase Our Destination's Strengths								
No.	Item	Action	Destination Pillar	Council Role/Partners	Cost	Timing	Business Unit(s)	Evaluation Method
3.1	Nature-Based Tourism	Investigate opportunities to establish grey nomad / camping / glamping opportunities in key destinations throughout Hornsby Shire.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rural River Parks and Bushland 	Internal Council action	\$\$ - unfunded	Long	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategy and Place Environment Parks, Trees and Recreation 	Opportunities formally considered by Council
3.2	Three Gorges Ride	Collaborate with key stakeholders to audit and prioritise the infrastructure needs of visitors undertaking the Three Gorges Ride, and work with pit stop retailers to showcase attractions, improve experiences and grow visitor numbers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Towns and Villages Parks and Bushland 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ku-ring-gai Council Transport for NSW NSW NPWS 	\$\$ - unfunded	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Infrastructure Planning Strategy and Place Communications 	Opportunities formally considered by Council
3.3	Great North Walk - accommodation to enhance visitation and local spend	Investigate accommodation opportunities to elevate Hornsby Shire's profile as a key location on the Great North Walk.	Parks and Bushland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NSW NPWS Crown Lands 	\$\$ - unfunded	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategy and Place Parks Environment 	Opportunities and considered formally by Council
3.4	Wayfinding and Interpretive Media	Audit and develop a wayfinding and interpretive plan to showcase key precincts and other destinations and attractions across Hornsby Shire.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Towns and Villages Rural River Bushland 	Internal Council action	\$\$ - unfunded	Long	Various	Plan developed, adopted, funded and delivered
3.5	Digital Itineraries	Audit Hornsby Shire's products and experiences and develop digital itineraries with a destination pillar focus.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Towns and Villages Rural River Bushland 	Council lead with industry partners	\$\$\$ - unfunded	Long	N/A	Requires employment of new staffing resource
3.6	Hornsby Park	Collaborate with appropriate community groups and relevant government stakeholders to promote and support the nomination for a Ku-ring-gai Geo-Region as an UNESCO Global Geopark, with a particular focus on Hornsby Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bushland 	Council lead with community and industry partners	\$	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategy and Place Environment 	UNESCO nomination progressed



8. Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation

Measuring and Monitoring DMP Objectives

This Hornsby Shire Destination Management Plan contains a range of themed initiatives, which are designed to support the destination's transition from a great place to visit into a must-visit destination. Council will monitor progress of the DMP with a view to realising this objective.

The initiatives presented in this Destination Management Plan represent a combination of:

- **Catalyst project planning and development initiatives** which require collaborative action combined with a well-planned course of project implementation for the desired outcomes to be realised over time; and
- Initiatives focussed on **strategic program implementation** that can be addressed as part of Council's day-to-day destination management planning functions in a strategic and whole-of-Council manner.

Some of the recommended actions seek to build on or continue initiatives already in place, some are already resourced while others require additional resourcing (depending on implementation priorities).

To ensure Hornsby Shire Council, in collaboration with other destination stakeholders, is working towards addressing the DMP vision and objectives, it will continually monitor, assess and report on the implementation of the actions and the achievement of key milestones.

Means of monitoring and evaluating implementation progress will include the use of both 'output' measures related directly to the recommended actions and their implementation as well as some broader 'outcome' metrics.

Destination Management Planning Performance Measures

Subject to collaborative commitment from destination stakeholders to the implementation of this Plan, key **outcome metrics**, which could be employed to track the development of Hornsby Shire's visitor economy, include the following:

- Hornsby Shire will achieve an increase in average length of stay by domestic overnight visitors from 3.3 nights to 4 nights.
- Hornsby Shire will increase international visitation from 2% of total visitors to 4% of total visitors.
- Hornsby Shire will increase its share of the Greater Sydney area's total domestic and international visitors from 3% to 5%.
- There will be at least a 10% increase in the tourism's direct and indirect contribution to Hornsby Shire's gross regional product (industry value-added), from \$460 million to \$500 million.

These desired outcomes will be monitored and measured using data sourced from Tourism Research Australia, economy.id / NIEIR and the Australian Bureau of Statistics' Tourism Satellite Accounts.

Output measures that will be used to monitor progress on set tasks include:

- Tracking progress of actions contained in this Plan - implementation rates (ongoing).
- Visitor economy operator/business feedback captured through regular engagement (ongoing).
- Regular (biennial) tourism operator confidence surveys and community satisfaction surveys on Hornsby Shire Council's approach to promoting and supporting a vibrant visitor economy in line with the vision as articulated in this Plan, focus areas and identified priorities.
- Regular **visitor satisfaction surveys** on the destination's products and experiences.

The Hornsby Shire Destination Management Plan 2026-2031 will be reviewed annually to ensure that implementation progress informs ongoing operational planning and delivery. Continual monitoring and reporting on implementation progress will ensure that Council's destination management planning priorities reflect the key challenges and opportunities of the day.



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