



A BLUEPRINT FOR A VIBRANT AND SUSTAINABLE VISITOR ECONOMY

Destination
Management
Plan 2026-2030





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This report has been prepared
with the assistance of



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

Glen Innes Severn Council acknowledges and pays respect to the Ngarabul people as the traditional custodians of this land, their elders past, present and emerging, and to Torres Strait Islander people and all First Nations people.

MAYOR'S MESSAGE



Councillor
Margot Davies
Mayor

The Glen Innes Highlands Destination Management Plan 2026–2030 (DMP) sets a clear and contemporary direction for how we will grow and manage our visitor economy over the next five years. This Plan sits as a critical delivery arm of our Economic Development Strategy, ensuring tourism strengthens our region's liveability, resilience, and long-term prosperity. It does this by leveraging the unique assets that define our identity — our landscapes, our culture, our heritage, and our people — through a wellbeing-economy lens.

Our visitor economy has been steadily gaining momentum, with strong post-pandemic growth in both day-trip and overnight visitation. Yet the data tells an important story: while we attract a high number of visitors, their average stay and spend remain below the NSW average.

Our job now is to convert visitation into deeper engagement, richer experiences, and stronger economic outcomes.

The global rise in nature-based travel, regenerative tourism, geotourism, and cultural immersion puts Glen Innes Highlands in an enviable position. We have the raw ingredients — striking granite country, World Heritage national parks, dark skies, rich Celtic and mining heritage, emerging creative industries, and an active, welcoming community. The DMP provides the roadmap to turn these strengths into sustained advantage.

A major emphasis in the Plan is the role of geotourism and the evolution of Glen Innes Highlands as one of three approved Australian pilot GeoRegions. This is not about a badge or a marketing slogan; it's a structured, globally recognised framework that lifts the quality, cohesion, and distinctiveness of our visitor offer.

By embedding geotourism, storytelling, conservation, and community engagement across experiences — from trails

and lookouts to festivals, museums, and digital interpretation — we can elevate Glen Innes Highlands as a nationally and internationally significant destination over time. The aspiration to be nominated as an Aspiring UNESCO Global Geopark reinforces this ambition and brings powerful opportunities for education, investment, environmental stewardship, and global visibility.

The Plan also supports the economic priority of diversification to offset the inevitable fluctuations of mainstay industries such as Agriculture which will remain central to our region, but are exposed to volatility — climate shocks, global price shifts, rising costs, and workforce pressures. Growing a vibrant and sustainable visitor economy which builds on our post-pandemic growth, provides a complementary pathway for resilience. It supports small business, strengthens our hospitality, arts, retail and events sectors, creates new employment opportunities, and broadens the economic base across our towns and villages. This greater diversification helps us weather future disruptions and strengthens our pathway toward our population target of 10,000 by 2035.

Across its four pillars — branding and visitor servicing; infrastructure and assets; product and experience development; and business engagement — the DMP presents 37 practical, well-sequenced actions. These include growing our trail and adventure network, elevating iconic events like the Celtic Festival and Minerama, strengthening our connection to the Washpool and Gibraltar Range National Parks, activating our CBD and villages, improving digital capability, building local supply chains, supporting agritourism, and improving the infrastructure that visitors and residents rely on every day.

This is a Plan built for the future: place-led, community-centred, globally connected, and grounded in the wellbeing and prosperity of our residents. It positions Glen Innes Highlands not only as a remarkable destination to visit, but as a flourishing community to live, work, learn and invest in.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY





The Glen Innes Highlands' visitor economy is growing, playing an increasingly important role in the development of the region's social, cultural, and economic success. To guide future prosperity, the Glen Innes Highlands Destination Management Plan 2026-2030 seeks to attract more visitors to the Glen Innes Highlands; increase visitor spend in the area; grow visitors' average length of stay; enhance visitor experiences; and increase the profile of the Glen Innes Highlands as one of just three approved Australian GeoRegions aspiring to be nominated as a UNESCO Global Geopark.

With a focus on place and informed by wellbeing economy and community wealth-building principles, the Plan capitalises on the Glen Innes Highlands' natural beauty, its vibrant and welcoming community, its picturesque towns and villages, an emerging foodie scene and its cultural richness, to leverage the global trend in geotourism and attract domestic and international visitors to grow a vibrant and sustainable visitor economy.

These strategic objectives are underpinned by the destination vision, that **the Glen Innes Highlands will be known globally as a world-class destination for geotourism, with authentic experiences that are intrinsically connected to its unique landscape, its rich cultural heritage, its people and its places.**

The Plan supports and promotes the Glen Innes Highlands' 'game-changer' opportunities, which will complement and enhance the destination offer to support prosperity and community wealth-building, including the New England Rail Trail; Centennial Parklands Skywalk; Stonehenge Reserve and Adventure Precinct; Emmaville Museum; Powerhouse Museum; Beardsley Waters / Eerindi Ponds; dark sky and sky country tourism; food-based agri-tourism; Indigenous cultural tourism and storytelling, and the development of signature events including the Celtic Festival and Minerama as well as new cultural and geotourism inspired events.

Aligned with the NSW Government's Visitor Economy Strategy 2035 and complementing the Glen Innes Highlands Economic Development Strategy 2026-2030, the Plan contains a suite of actions across four strategic pillars, focussed on:

- **Destination branding, marketing and visitor servicing;**
- **Visitor economy asset and infrastructure planning;**
- **Destination product and experience development;** and
- **Visitor economy business engagement and support.**

To ensure effective outcomes, 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 will be tracked through measurable outcomes, ensuring accountability and transparency while also providing the opportunity to pivot where circumstances dictate. The Plan will evolve with annual reviews and in line with Council resources and the priorities of the day, ensuring it remains relevant and effective.



GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Australian Tourism Data Warehouse

Australia's national online database for tourism information. It collects, stores and distributes details about tourism products including businesses, attractions, tours, events, accommodation and services, and makes this information available to tourism websites, apps and visitor centres across the country. Its main purpose is to help travellers find reliable, up-to-date information and to help tourism operators promote their businesses more easily.

Community Wealth-building

An approach to economic development that strengthens local economies by ensuring the value created within a community stays there. It focuses on supporting local business growth, creating secure local jobs, increasing spending on local goods and services and encouraging the reinvestment of locally generated wealth to benefit the community.

Destination Management Plan

A statement of intent to manage a destination to support the visitor economy through measures including branding, marketing, visitor information delivery, infrastructure planning and local business support.

ECO Destination Certification

Ecotourism Australia's ECO Destination Certification program is available to all nature-based destinations and focuses on sustainability through a regional commitment to ecotourism and sustainable and responsible tourism practices.

Ecotourism

Responsible travel to natural areas (where travellers are mindful of their natural surroundings and seek to be good custodians of the environment. Through interpretation and education, ecotourism helps to conserve the environment and sustain the wellbeing of local communities.

Economic Development

The continuous improvement in a region or locale's level of income and capital (wealth) and the distribution of that wealth (through expenditure and jobs) to the community. Measured by advances in levels of investment, income generation and employment, it is also defined by improvements in education, skills, health, culture, community wellbeing, a sense of place and the natural environment.

GeoRegion

An area that is defined by its special natural features, such as unique rocks, landforms, landscapes, geological history, its heritage and culture. GeoRegions often bring together adjoining communities that share these features so they can protect them and use them to support education, tourism, economic development and community wellbeing.

Geotourism

A form of tourism that focuses on the geological features, landscapes and natural processes that help shape and define a region. Geotourism emphasises understanding and appreciation of the earth's physical characteristics including landforms, rock formations, fossils, soils and natural heritage, while also supporting the conservation of these features.

Geotrail

A themed visitor route, usually a walking, driving or cycling trail, that connects a series of sites with notable geological or landscape features.

Positive-impact Geotourism

A form of tourism that helps the destinations people visit by restoring, enhancing or renewing ecosystems and avoiding adverse impacts to leave the natural environment better off than it was beforehand, for future generations to enjoy.

UNESCO Global Geopark

A single, unified geographical area where sites and landscapes of international geological significance are managed with a holistic concept of protection, education and sustainable development.

Visitor Economy

A more contemporary definition of tourism, a visitor economy includes people traveling for holidays, education or business and those visiting friends and relatives as well as the diversity of businesses and destinations that serve them.

Wellbeing Economy

A form of economic development that seeks to find a balance, where economic activity supports a community's wellbeing today without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. In this approach, the economy isn't seen as separate from community wellbeing, but as a tool to enhance it.

OUR VISION: A VIBRANT AND SUSTAINABLE VISITOR ECONOMY

Destination Management Plan Purpose and Objectives

The Glen Innes Highlands Destination Management Plan 2026-2030 is Glen Innes Severn Council's statement of intent to manage the Glen Innes Highlands visitor destination.

Aligned with the Glen Innes Highlands Economic Development Strategy 2026-2030, it draws on contemporary wellbeing economy frameworks to inform a vision, pillars and actions to grow a vibrant and sustainable visitor economy, through initiatives to attract more visitors to the Glen Innes Highlands; increase visitor spend; grow visitors' average length of stay; enhance visitor experiences; and increase the profile of the Glen Innes Highlands as one of just three approved Australian GeoRegions aspiring to be nominated as a UNESCO Global Geopark.

Destination management planning is a form of place-making. Council takes the lead in this space as part of its economic development remit, working in collaboration with its government, non-government and

industry partners, to address the enablers of a vibrant visitor economy, including the natural, built and social/cultural environment, supporting infrastructure and services and systems of information management and delivery including destination branding.

This Plan provides the framework to prepare for and capitalise on the Glen Innes Highlands' comparative advantages and points of difference expressed through its arts and culture, its history and heritage, its food and beverage offering, and its natural features and landscape, focussed on geotourism and its evolving GeoRegion status.

Recognising that natural assets are a primary driver of visitation and are the catalyst for jobs and economic development, this Plan reflects Council's aspiration to move beyond traditional tourism planning by positioning the Glen Innes Highlands as a nationally and internationally recognised, resilient, and community-centred destination, as one of three approved Australian GeoRegions seeking to be nominated as an Aspiring UNESCO Global Geopark.

By embedding geotourism, wellbeing, and community wealth-building principles, this Destination Management Plan provides a roadmap to capitalise on the Glen Innes Highlands' abundant natural and cultural assets, to leverage the global trend in geotourism and attract domestic and international visitors to grow a vibrant and sustainable visitor economy.





Our Vision: A vibrant and sustainable visitor economy

The Glen Innes Highlands will be known globally as a world-class destination for geotourism, with authentic experiences that are intrinsically connected to its unique landscape, its rich cultural heritage, its people and its places.

Destination Management Planning Framework

Informed by research, stakeholder consultation and analysis, the Glen Innes Highlands Destination Management Plan articulates how Council, as the custodian of the Plan, will continue to work with Destination Country and Outback NSW, key government agencies and industry partners, to increase the visitor economy's contribution to the sustainable growth and development of the Glen Innes Highlands.

This Plan guides decision-making in four strategic pillars, focussed on:

- **Destination branding, marketing and visitor servicing;**
- **Visitor economy asset and infrastructure planning;**
- **Destination product and experience development;** and
- **Visitor economy business engagement and support.**

Through these pillars, this Plan delivers a suite of initiatives designed to capitalise on the destination's comparative and competitive advantages as well as developing experiences and attractions to capture new, high-end, high value visitor markets.

It includes initiatives to leverage the region's key assets and adding value to the destination's offer, presenting a viable pathway to building tourism as a pillar of the Glen Innes Highland's economic development. Importantly, it supports our aspiration to achieve a population growth target of 10,000 by 2035, by making the Glen Innes Highlands not only a bucket-list destination to visit, but also a thriving community to live, learn, work and invest in.

A man with a mustache, wearing a black balm bray, a white shirt, a striped tie, a black vest, and a blue and red plaid kilt, stands in a grassy park. He is holding and playing a bagpipe. The background shows trees and a large stone monument. On the left side of the image, there are two curved lines, one orange and one white, above the section header.

2 DESTINATION PROFILE AND VISITATION TRENDS

The Destination

Straddling the Great Dividing Range in the heart of the New England High Country, the Glen Innes Highlands, is home to the Ngarabul people who have lived on the land for thousands of years.

Well-connected to Brisbane, Sydney, Outback Australia and the NSW North Coast, the Glen Innes Highlands is surrounded by productive agricultural land and stunning national parks. With a cool temperate climate and four distinct seasons, the area attracts the 'snow chasers' in winter, people escaping the humidity of summer, and visitors seeking the spectacular displays of spring blossoms and autumn colours.

The Glen Innes Highlands has a rich pastoral and mining heritage with a strong Celtic connection. Many pioneering pastoralists were Scottish, while early miners were Irish, Welsh and Cornish. The destination's Celtic connections are recognised by the Australian Standing Stones in Glen Innes and celebrated by the annual Australian Celtic Festival.

The landscape of the Glen Innes Highlands is varied, with dissected gorge country, waterfalls and rainforest gullies along its eastern edge. The remainder of the district is elevated plateau, dominated by 'granite country' with spectacular granite outcrops, peaks and balancing rocks. Around one-quarter of the Glen Innes Highlands is National Park and State Forests, including the World Heritage listed Washpool and Gibraltar Range National Parks.

The Glen Innes Highlands' natural beauty, vibrant and welcoming community, picturesque towns and villages, its emerging foodie scene and its cultural richness offer exciting opportunities for sustainable tourism development. Its status as a pilot geo-region – one of only three in Australia – reflects its point of difference, one that integrates landscape, landform, culture, biodiversity, geology and the region's night skies.

Looking ahead, there is enormous potential to grow a vibrant and sustainable visitor economy as a pillar of the Glen Innes Highlands' economic development and community wellbeing. To do so requires a considered understanding of broader trends which are having an influence over the prospects for visitor economy growth and development and the ways in which the Glen Innes Highlands, as a destination, can respond.



The Glen Innes Highlands

The Visitor Economy

The visitor economy is broader than that which people normally regard as ‘tourism’. It spans those traveling for holidays, education or business and those visiting friends and relatives – both domestic and international – as well as the businesses, service providers and destinations that serve them.

The Glen Innes Highlands’ visitor economy comprises businesses and service providers 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.

The Glen Innes Highlands’ visitor economy is underpinned by its strategic location, its unique natural features and landscape, its rich European history and First Peoples cultural heritage, complemented by the quality of its recreation, leisure and entertainment assets as well as its quality accommodation and food and beverage experiences, offering a contemporary visitor experience.

Visitation Profile and Trends

According to Tourism Research Australia (TRA), in 2024, domestic overnight visitors accounted for the largest share of visitation to the Glen Innes Highlands (57%) followed by domestic day-trippers (43%) and internationals (just 0.2% of total visitation). Domestic overnight visitors tend to contribute significantly more to the local economy than day-trippers, owing to higher spending on accommodation, dining, and other services.

Since 2021, the Glen Innes Highlands has experienced steady growth in total visitation, rising from 173,571 visits in 2021 to 198,553 in 2024. This represents a robust recovery from the COVID-19 downturn, with 2024 visitation reaching 129% of 2019 levels.

The primary driver of this growth in visitation to the Glen Innes Highlands has been the surge in domestic day-trip visitors, whose numbers have increased by 146% since 2019. Domestic overnight visitation too, is above pre-pandemic levels at 121%.

International tourism continues to play a minimal role in the Glen Innes Highlands, down from 1.5% of total visitation to the area in 2019 and to just 0.2% in 2024.

Visitation to the Glen Innes Highlands, 2019-2024

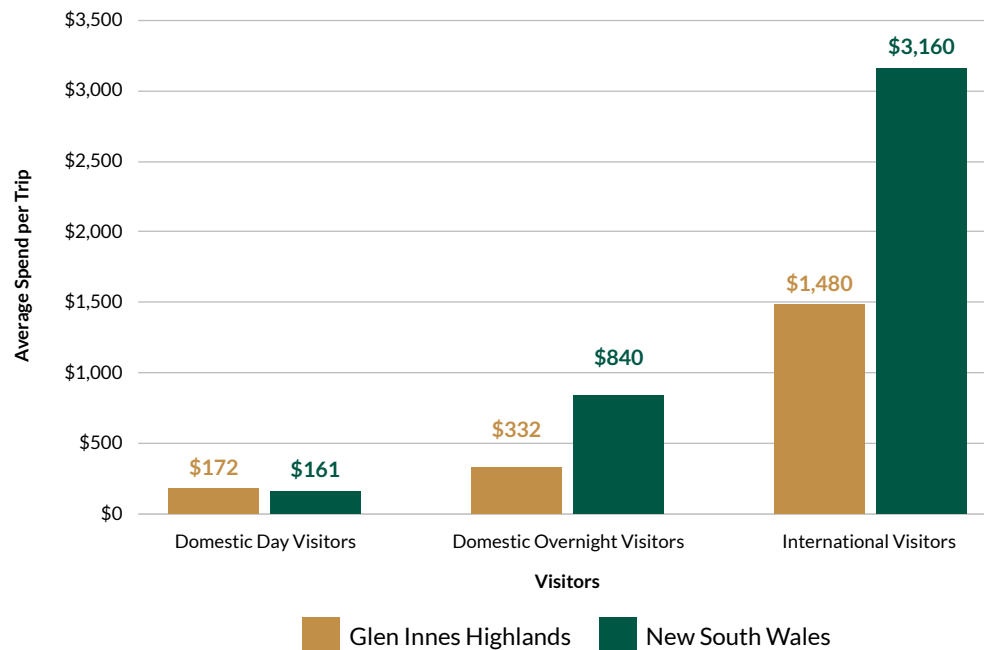


Source: Tourism Research Australia with interpretations by SC Lennon & Associates

According to Tourism Research Australia data compiled by REMPLAN, domestic day-trippers to the Glen Innes Highlands spend, on average, \$172 per visit. This compares to the average spend per domestic day trip in NSW of \$161 per visit.

The TRA data shows that domestic overnight visitors to the Glen Innes Highlands spend, on average, \$332 per visit. This is far less than the average spend per domestic overnight visitor to NSW, of \$840 per visit. International visitors to the Glen Innes Highlands spend, on average, \$1,480 per visit. This is less than half the average spend per domestic day trip visitor to NSW, of \$3,160 per visit, suggesting there is scope to encourage higher levels of visitor spend in the region.

Visitors' Average Spend Per Trip, Glen Innes Highlands, 2024

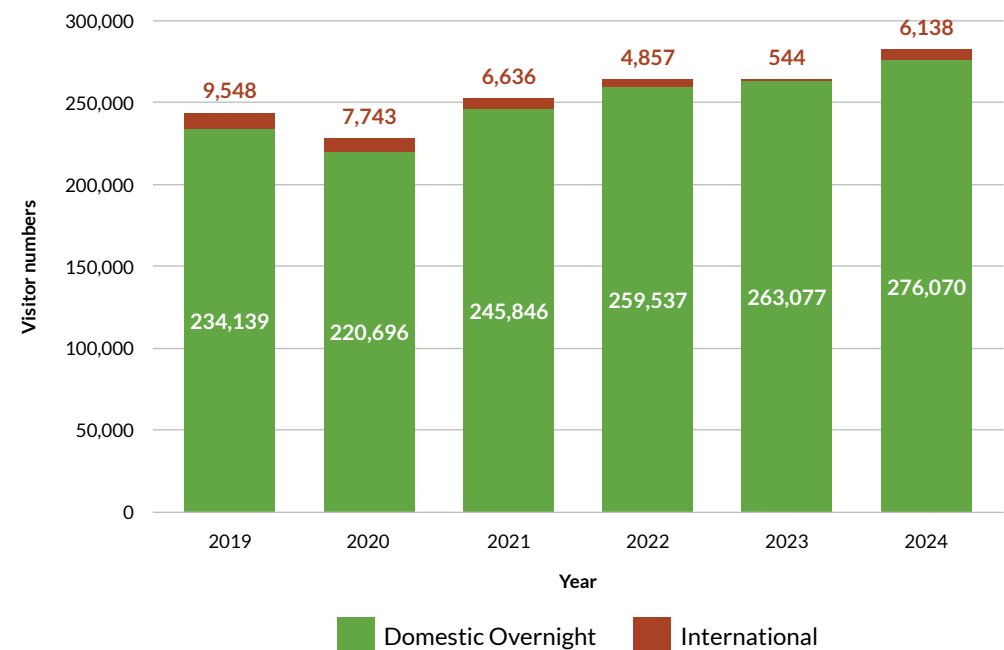


Source: REMPLAN and Tourism Research Australia with interpretations by SC Lennon & Associates

Visitor nights to the Glen Innes Highlands are driven by domestic overnight visitors who, in 2024, accounted for 98% of all visitor nights.

Visitor nights spent in the Glen Innes Highlands have increased over the five years to 2024, at an average annual rate of 3%. This has been driven by an increase in domestic overnight stays, with international visitor nights spent in the region still well below pre-pandemic levels.

Visitor Nights in the Glen Innes Highlands, 2019-2024



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

2. DESTINATION PROFILE AND VISITATION TRENDS

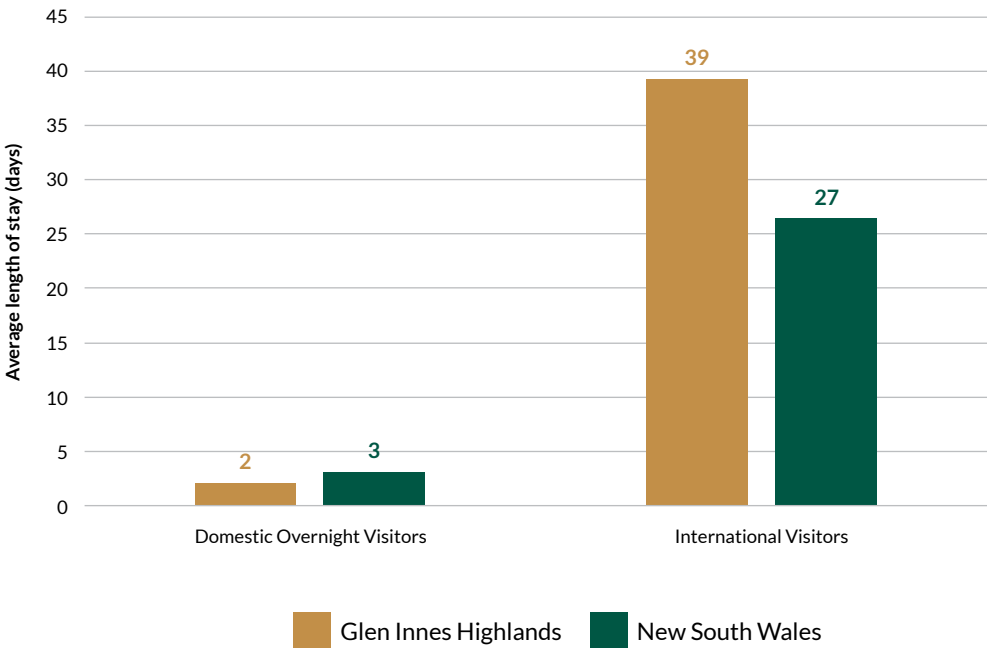
According to Tourism Research Australia, on average, domestic overnight visitors will spend 2 nights in the Glen Innes Highlands, just below the NSW average of 3 nights.

Data sourced from REMPLAN shows that international visitors to the Glen Innes Highlands will stay for an average length of 39 nights, compared to the NSW average of 27 nights.

Between 2019 and 2024, the average length of stay of visitors to the Glen Innes Highlands remained stable.

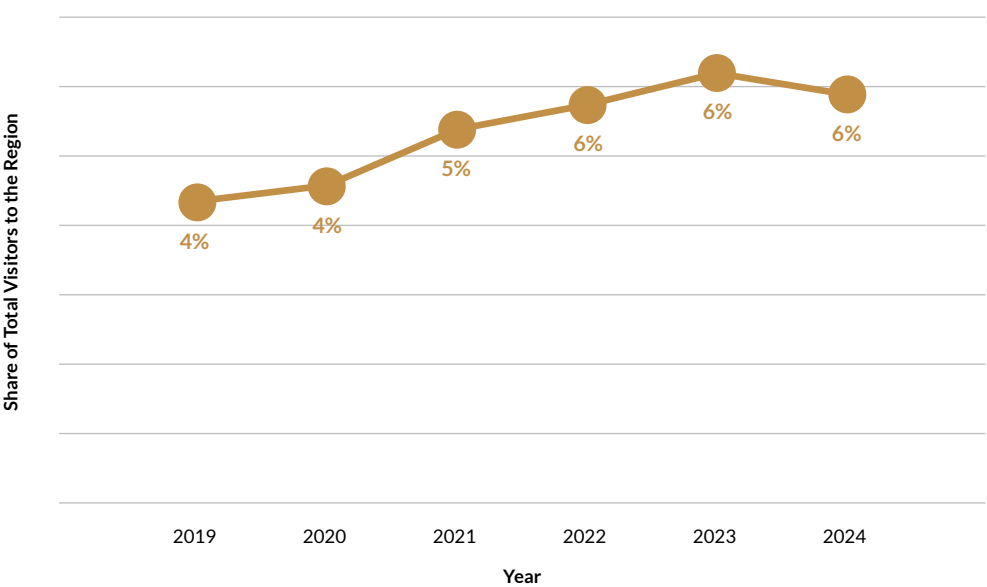
Encouragingly, the Glen Innes Highlands has steadily increased its share of total visitation within the New England North West Region, growing its regional market share from 4.3% in 2019 to 5.4% in 2021 and 5.9% in 2024.

Average Length of Stay, Domestic Overnight and International Visitors to the Glen Innes Highlands, 2019-2023



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

Glen Innes Highlands' Share of Visitors to the New England North West Region, 2019-2024



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

3 GEOTOURISM AND THE GLEN INNES HIGHLANDS

Destination Management Planning for Geopark Status

Through the actions presented in this Plan, the Glen Innes Highlands, as a destination, will continue to evolve as a nationally and internationally-recognised GeoRegion defined by its diversity of mutually-reinforcing geographic, cultural, environmental and economic attributes and attractors.

By embedding geotourism, wellbeing, and community wealth-building principles at its core, it is designed to help move beyond traditional tourism planning to become a globally distinctive strategy, positioning the Glen Innes Highlands as an internationally recognised, resilient, and community-centred destination, a pilot wellbeing economy leader and an Aspiring UNESCO Global Geopark.

UNESCO Global Geoparks are single, unified geographical areas where sites and landscapes of international geological significance are managed with a holistic concept of protection, education and sustainable development. A Global Geopark uses its geological heritage, in connection with all other aspects of the area's natural and cultural heritage, to enhance awareness and understanding of key issues facing society, such as using our earth's resources sustainably, mitigating the effects of climate change and reducing natural disasters-related risks.

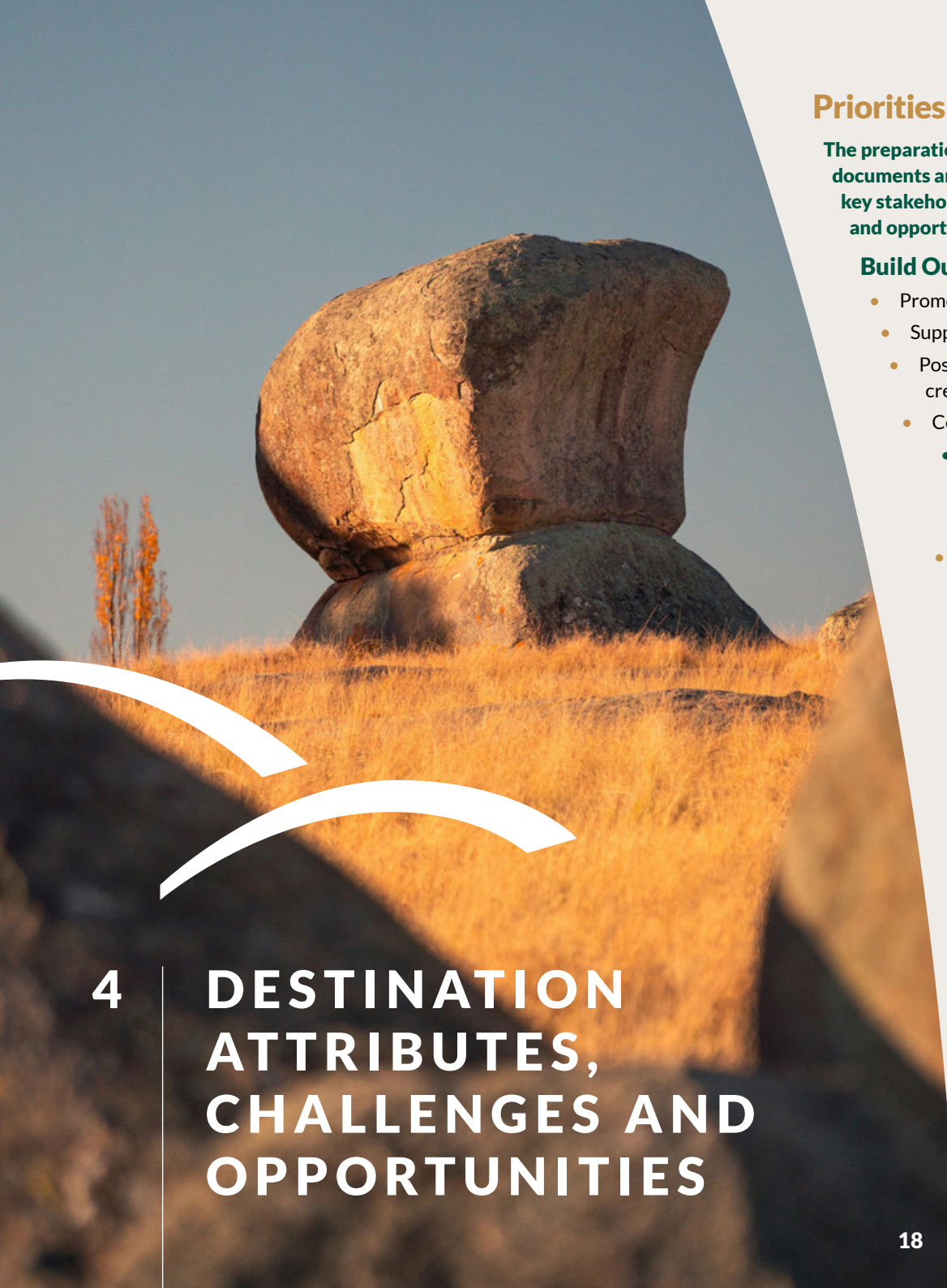
At present, there are 229 UNESCO Global Geoparks in 50 countries promoting geotourism, geotours and geotrails as well as featuring hospitality facilities promoting local cuisine and services. Designation has helped revitalise languages, arts and crafts, an interest in conservation and community goodwill.

With an aspiration to be one of three Australian GeoRegions nominated as an Aspiring UNESCO Global Geopark, the Glen Innes Highlands has an opportunity to build on its abundant natural and cultural assets to leverage the global trend in geotourism and attract both domestic and international visitors.

Glen Innes Highlands already contains many of the attributes that define successful Geoparks, including dramatic granite tor landscapes such as Stonehenge, the Demon Fault and escarpment systems, accessible fossicking sites, iconic waterfalls, rich mining heritage (Emmaville–Torrington), upland wetlands, and existing geotrail opportunities such as the World Heritage Walk, Miners Way, and Maybole–Ben Lomond volcanic landscapes. These provide a strong foundation for a future UNESCO nomination.

Using this Destination Management Plan as the guiding document, Glen Innes Severn Council, working in collaboration with its partners, will work to:

- Ensure that the GeoRegion framework is the unifying lens for all new tourism programs and projects, ensuring every new asset, event and experience contributes evidence toward a future UNESCO Global Geopark nomination;
- Develop integrated interpretation and storytelling around geology, landscapes, biodiversity, First Nations cultural heritage, our Celtic heritage and sustainability; and
- Establish the Glen Innes Highlands as the pilot for national geotourism development, positioning it as a global exemplar of how tourism, environment, culture and community can co-create sustainable prosperity and community wellbeing.



Priorities for Growing a Vibrant and Sustainable Visitor Economy

The preparation of this Destination Management Plan is informed by an assessment of key strategic documents and data, the findings of a business and community survey and targeted consultation with key stakeholders. The findings of the research, consultation and analysis points to some key needs and opportunities which require attention. In summary, these include:

Build Our Brand:

- Promote our location and lifestyle advantage to visitors and prospective investors
- Support and promote a vibrant nature-based visitor economy anchored by our geotourism assets
- Position the Glen Innes Highlands' geology, Celtic and First Nations cultural heritage and creative culture as the foundation of a distinctive destination brand
- Continue to celebrate our Celtic heritage and the region's mining heritage, including through:
 - Investment in and promotion of Centennial Parklands and the Australian Standing Stones
 - Australian Celtic Festival
 - Land of the Beardies Museum
- Develop integrated interpretation and storytelling around the region's geology, landscapes, biodiversity, First Nations and Celtic heritage, and renewable energy

Game-Changer Tourism Investments:

Support and promote 'game-changer' opportunities that complement and enhance our destination offer and which support prosperity and community wealth-building, including:

- New England Rail Trail
- Centennial Parklands Skywalk
- Stonehenge Reserve and Adventure Precinct
- Emmaville Museum
- Powerhouse Museum
- Beardy Waters / Eerindi Ponds
- Dark Sky and Sky Country Tourism
- Food-based Agri-tourism
- Indigenous cultural tourism and storytelling (e.g. at the Cooramah Aboriginal Cultural Centre)
- Festivals and events as geotourism platforms – expanding Celtic Festival, Minerama and new cultural/geotourism inspired events

4 DESTINATION ATTRIBUTES, CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Place Activation:

- Invest in our town centres and villages (place-making) and retail (and hospitality) revitalisation to encourage visitors to stay longer
- Support local artists and creatives to contribute to the stories of the Glen Innes Highlands (e.g. public art, sculpture trails, galleries, artisan workshops, storytelling)
- Explore opportunities to activate the night-time economy
- Explore opportunities for accessible tourism
- Plan for and invest in local festivals and events as part of a coordinated calendar

Sustainability and the Environment:

- Protect, sustain and leverage our natural features and landscape to grow a vibrant visitor economy (agri-tourism, positive-impact geotourism)
- Adopt zero-waste and renewable energy targets for festivals and events

Business & Industry Engagement and Support:

- Support our small business operating in the visitor economy, including our Indigenous businesses, to thrive
- Support community-owned / social enterprises
- Support community-led approaches to the delivery of festivals and events
- Prioritise opportunities to grow the visitor economy that maximise local ownership, procurement, and participation, reducing economic leakage
- Support digital awareness and capabilities amongst visitor economy operators
- Position the Highlands Hub as an innovation incubator for geotourism ideas and a collaborative space linking business, community and creative industries
- Establish a structured agritourism framework to assist farmers diversify their income through the creation of visitor experiences

Education & Employment:

- Support training and employment pathways including in areas of need and opportunity (e.g. hospitality, event management, visitor servicing, interpretation)
- Invest in local training to strengthen workforce capacity and wellbeing

Enabling Infrastructure and Service Delivery:

- Address visitor accommodation shortfalls across various market segments including caravan and camping through to high-end eco-tourism accommodation
- Prioritise road transport infrastructure upgrades
- Address public transport shortfalls
- Invest in modern directional and interpretive signage and remove outdated signs
- Provide consistent and visually-appealing town and village entry signage
- Provide well-curated information bays to improve visitor information delivery and encourage longer stays
- Support continual investment in digital connectivity (phone and Internet)
- Invest in digital forms of information delivery and visitor servicing including online (including for bookings) and in-place (at the VIC and in the region)

Community Engagement and Support:

- Support greater investment in arts and cultural facilities
- Engage with First Nations stakeholders to support and celebrate our Indigenous cultural heritage and connection to Country as a core component of the destination experience
- Invest in social connectivity and belonging (sporting and community clubs/associations)
- Invest in opportunities to utilise our sport and recreation infrastructure (indoor sports centre)
- Use nature-based and cultural tourism as a tool for resilience building, reducing isolation, enhancing belonging, and supporting community identity

Advocacy and Partnership-building:

- Build geotourism links across the Glen Innes CBD, villages and regional attractions
- Work with Destination Country and Outback NSW and New England High Country in advancing the Glen Innes Highlands' destination narrative, focussed on our geotourism assets and opportunities
- Leverage government funding support for investment in infrastructure, attractions and events
- Use the UNESCO Geopark pathway to seek government (and other sources of) funding
- Integrate tourism advocacy with housing, workforce, and liveability agendas, showing how visitor economy growth supports our target population of 10,000 by 2035

An aerial photograph of a lush green forested hill. In the foreground, a wooden viewing platform with a dark roof and a small wooden bench sits on a cleared area. A winding path leads up to the platform. The background shows a sprawling suburban town with many houses, green lawns, and trees, set against a backdrop of rolling hills under a cloudy sky. Two curved lines, one green and one white, frame the text on the left side of the image.

5 DESTINATION MANAGEMENT PLANNING PARTNERSHIPS AND STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT

A Partnership Approach to Destination Management Planning

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

Through the implementation of this Destination Management Plan, effective tourism promotion and development will be served by collaborative partnerships between Glen Innes Severn Council, Destination Country and Outback NSW, industry partners and the communities of the Glen Innes Highlands, to increase the visitor economy's contribution to sustainable economic development and community wellbeing.

The Destination Management Plan aligns with the pillars of the NSW Government's Visitor Economy Strategy 2035, with a focus on building the destination brand through a geotourism lens, showcasing the destination's strengths and facilitating the sustainable growth of the Glen Innes Highlands visitor economy.



Strategic Alignment





6 DESTINATION MANAGEMENT PLANNING PILLARS AND ACTIONS

Destination Management Planning Framework

This Plan contains 37 actions across four pillars that are focussed on destination branding, marketing and visitor servicing; visitor economy asset and infrastructure planning; destination product and experience development; and visitor economy business engagement and support.

Destination Management Planning Pillars



STRATEGIC PILLAR 1

Destination Branding, Marketing and Visitor Servicing

Destination branding, marketing and promotion, supported by effective visitor information management and delivery, is essential for articulating the Glen Innes Highlands' unique selling proposition, underpinned by its geological, other natural and cultural heritage attributes, to attract a greater diversity of high-yield visitors and establish its status as just one of three approved Australian GeoRegions seeking nomination as a potential Aspiring UNESCO Global Geopark.



STRATEGIC PILLAR 2

Visitor Economy Asset and Infrastructure Planning

Visitor economy asset and infrastructure planning (and delivery) is essential for accommodating, entertaining, informing and transporting visitors to and throughout the Glen Innes Highlands.



STRATEGIC PILLAR 3

Destination Product and Experience Development

Developing and articulating the Glen Innes Highlands' bookable attractions and experiences will serve to bring both locals and visitors together to enjoy the region's natural assets, arts and culture, food and drink and its festivals and events, which celebrate and promote the destination.



STRATEGIC PILLAR 4

Visitor Economy Business Engagement and Support

Providing information and support for businesses operating in the local visitor economy, including those in accommodation and food services, arts and culture, recreational services and retail trade, will ensure they are well-equipped to engage with and service an evolving visitor market which values the Glen Innes Highlands' unique natural and cultural assets and its compelling products and experiences.

Each action is assigned a level of priority / timing according to whether it is a short-term measure (to be implemented in Year 1), a medium-term initiative (Years 2 and 3) or a longer-term initiative (Years 4-5). Potential implementation partners are also identified.

Designed to capitalise on the unique character and features of the Glen Innes Highlands, the actions are outcomes-focussed with an emphasis on what needs to be done to enhance the contribution of the Glen Innes visitor economy to prosperity and community wellbeing. The actions are presented in the following pages, under each of the four pillars.



STRATEGIC PILLAR 1 – ACTION PLAN

Destination Branding, Marketing & Visitor Servicing

1

2

3

4

ACTION	POTENTIAL PARTNERS	TIMING
1.1 Collaborate across Council and with tourism operators to take a place-based approach to destination management, branding, marketing and promotion that embeds geotourism and community wealth-building principles and jointly review and develop the Glen Innes Highlands brand to build a shared visual identity, ownership and use.	Glen Innes Business Chamber; visitor economy operators	Short
1.2 Develop integrated interpretation and storytelling around the Glen Innes Highlands' geotourism assets and attractions including its landscapes, biodiversity, First Nations cultural heritage and Celtic heritage as the basis for reviewing and evolving the destination brand.	Glen Innes Business Chamber; Destination Country and Outback NSW (DNCO); New England High Country; NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS); Geotourism Australia; visitor economy operators	Short
1.3 Develop and deliver a campaign by 2027 to build understanding and pride in Glen Innes Highlands' GeoRegion status across the local community and key domestic and international visitor markets.	Glen Innes Business Chamber; DNCO; New England High Country; NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS); Geotourism Australia; visitor economy operators	Short
1.4 Research visitors' preferred methods of sourcing information and emerging trends and technologies to determine an optimal type and mix of in-person (VIC) and digital visitor information delivery methods moving forward.	Visitor economy operators	Short
1.5 Review and refresh the destination website to showcase our unique people, places, culture and experiences, optimising the user experience to grow engagement and inspire visitation to the Glen Innes Highlands.	DNCO; New England High Country; Glen Innes Business Chamber; visitor economy operators	Medium
1.6 Design and implement a destination marketing campaign targeting high-value, conscious and responsible travellers who are seeking unique and meaningful positive-impact geotourism experiences.	DNCO; New England High Country; visitor economy operators	Medium
1.7 Showcase, in Council's investment prospectus materials, the Glen Innes Highlands' geotourism assets as compelling lifestyle attributes defining the Glen Innes GeoRegion as a place in which to live, learn, work, visit and invest.	DNCO; New England High Country; State Government	Medium
1.8 Curate an App-based Glen Innes Highlands digital geotourism trail (using QR codes and other technologies like soundtrails) to interpret local history and heritage, flora and fauna, geological features and First Nations culture.	Geotourism Australia; NPWS; visitor economy operators	Medium
1.9 Undertake research into the experience of the Glen Innes Highlands as a visitor destination using biennial visitor satisfaction surveys to identify visitor experience gaps and needs in line with our geotourism aspirations.	DNCO	Long



STRATEGIC PILLAR 2 – ACTION PLAN

Visitor economy asset and infrastructure planning

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ACTION	POTENTIAL PARTNERS	TIMING
2.1 Develop and implement a wayfinding and interpretive signage plan using a geotourism lens to showcase the Glen Innes Highlands' visitor economy assets, attractions, precincts and experiences.	Geotourism Australia; State Government	Short
2.2 Review visitor rest stop and information bay site options and advocate for investment in existing and new facilities (including dump points and EV charging stations) complemented with visitor information to service drive tourists.	State Government	Short
2.3 Explore options to extend or improve the Skywalk to make it a more compelling attraction for visitors.	State Government	Short
2.4 Audit existing capacity to accommodate self-contained travellers in 4WDs, caravans, campervans and trailers that could be called upon during times of high demand for visitor accommodation, such as large events.	State Government; visitor economy operators	Short
2.5 Investigate needs, gaps and opportunities and advocate for public and private investment in visitor accommodation including high quality eco-certified product and to explore the opportunity to seek ECO Destination Certification.	Ecotourism Australia; DNCO	Short
2.6 Explore the feasibility of utilising the Glen Innes Indoor Sports Centre for alternative uses that will serve the dual purpose of enhancing recreational facilities for the community and broadening the visitor experience.	Internal	Medium
2.7 Develop village tourism activation plans – for Deepwater, Emmaville, Glencoe and Red Range to address place activation priorities as catalysts for grant funding applications.	Community groups; local artists and other creatives	Medium
2.8 Encourage both day and night-time activation in the Glen Innes CBD through investment in installations / attractions and physically connected recreation, leisure and entertainment experiences.	Glen Innes Business Chamber; visitor economy operators	Medium
2.9 Audit the Glen Innes Highlands' tourism assets for accessibility compliance, including accommodation, conferencing space, facilities and attractions, to identify gaps and opportunities for grant funding in support of more accessible tourism.	Visitor economy operators	Medium



STRATEGIC PILLAR 3 – ACTION PLAN

Destination product and experience development

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ACTION	POTENTIAL PARTNERS	TIMING
3.1 To inform a strategic approach to advocacy, business case preparation and funding support, prepare prospectus materials to re-cast catalyst projects (e.g. New England Rail Trail, Skywalk, Beardsy Waters) into game-changers that deliver on the vision to become a globally-recognised geotourism destination.	State and Federal Governments	Short
3.2 Continue to explore partnership and pursue funding opportunities to progress the construction of the Glen Innes to Ben Lomond section of the New England Rail Trail.	Rail Trails Australia; neighbouring councils	Short
3.3 Create a nationally recognised annual nature-based adventure-sport event that showcases the Glen Innes Highlands' trails and points of interest (e.g. trail running, orienteering, gravel riding, mountain biking).	Visitor economy operators; State Government	Short
3.4 Invest in marketing, supporting infrastructure, partnerships and advocacy to strengthen the Glen Innes Highlands' position as the gateway to the World Heritage-listed Washpool and Gibraltar Range National Parks.	State Government	Short
3.5 Prioritise opportunities to develop First Nations cultural tourism as an integral component of the Glen Innes Highlands' geotourism experience, including opportunities that complement and add value to existing attractions and events.	First Nations representatives; Geotourism Australia	Medium
3.6 Continue to support and enhance the Australian Celtic Festival and Minerama Fossicking, Gem and Jewellery Show, as iconic national events that celebrate the Glen Innes Highlands' rich heritage, showcasing connections between culture, landscapes, geology, the environment and community.	DNCO; event organisers	Medium
3.7 Develop a collaborative approach to the planning, promotion and delivery of the New England High Country's iconic festivals and events, including coordination of a regional events calendar.	DNCO; neighbouring councils; event organisers	Long
3.8 To extend the visitor season and support the night-time economy, investigate the feasibility of incubating an event (e.g. a season-inspired festival) using a collaborative approach to CBD place activation and promotion.	Glen Innes Business Chamber; visitor economy operators	Long
3.9 Utilise the Highlands Hub and showcase the Glen Innes Highlands' geodiversity, biodiversity and cultural heritage to package geotourism products and services that will attract business conferences and events.	Glen Innes Business Chamber; natural and cultural heritage non-governmental organisations (NGOs); visitor economy operators	Long



STRATEGIC PILLAR 4 – ACTION PLAN

Visitor economy business engagement and support

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ACTION	POTENTIAL PARTNERS	TIMING
4.1 Investigate and consider the establishment of a GeoRegion Working Group for an industry-led (project based) network to drive the Glen Innes Highlands Destination Management Plan actions.	Geotourism Australia; visitor economy operators; geotourism stakeholders	Short
4.2 Explore the feasibility of a co-sponsored approach to the delivery of customer service training for Glen Innes Highlands businesses operating in the visitor economy.	Business NSW; Glen Innes Business Chamber	Short
4.3 Facilitate access to business support and training resources for tourism operators, including on best practice for community wealth-building through local procurement, job creation and community engagement.	Business NSW; Glen Innes Business Chamber	Short
4.4 Facilitate and support operator registration with the Australian Tourism Data Warehouse (ATDW) to increase the destination's digital visibility and ensure consistent, high-quality information across online platforms.	ATDW; Glen Innes Business Chamber	Short
4.5 To address gaps in online booking, marketing and storytelling, connect the Glen Innes Highlands' tourism operators with digital capability-building programs offered by State and Federal Government agencies.	Business NSW; Glen Innes Business Chamber	Medium
4.6 Explore means for compiling, synthesising and disseminating up-to-date data on visitor markets, trends and preferences, to assist local operators and prospective investors in their planning and promotion.	Glen Innes Business Chamber	Medium
4.7 Provide farmers and aspiring agritourism operators with information and advice on key matters and solutions concerning land zoning, development approvals and infrastructure requirements.	State Government; agritourism operators	Medium
4.8 Work with employers in the visitor economy to understand their workforce and skills needs and identify ways to tailor training and skills development for the Glen Innes Highlands' visitor economy workforce.	Visitor economy operators; Business NSW; Glen Innes Business Chamber; education and training providers	Medium
4.9 Provide information and advice for operators seeking grant funding for tourism and event projects, prioritising those that maximise local ownership, procurement and participation.	Business NSW; Glen Innes Business Chamber	Medium
4.10 Work with businesses and not-for-profits organising festivals and events (e.g. new music events) to make it easier to do business by assisting them through the regulatory and approval process.	Service NSW; Glen Innes Business Chamber	Medium

7 IMPLEMENTATION, MONITORING AND EVALUATION



Measuring and Monitoring DMP Objectives

This Destination Management Plan contains a range of themed initiatives, which are designed to support the Glen Innes Highlands' transition to an internationally-recognised geotourism region. The actions 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, place-based 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 Glen Innes Severn 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. These include measures of community wellbeing that are directly linked to our aspirations to grow the Glen Innes Highlands as a nationally and internationally recognised geotourism destination and Aspiring UNESCO Global Geopark.

Destination Management Planning Performance Measures

Key **outcome metrics**, which could be employed to track the development of the Glen Innes Highlands visitor economy, include, for example:

- The Glen Innes Highlands will achieve an increase in average length of stay by domestic overnight visitors from 2 nights to 4 nights.
- International visitation will grow from less than 1% of total visitors to 5% of total visitors.
- The Glen Innes Highlands will increase its share of the New England North West Region's total domestic and international visitors from 6% to 10%.
- There will be at least a 10% increase in the tourism sector's direct and indirect contribution to the Glen Innes Highland's GRP (industry value-added), from \$27 million to \$30 million.
- Tourism sector employment will increase, from 8% of local jobs to at least 10%.

Others include, for example:

- Levels of local procurement / spend in the Glen Innes Highlands visitor economy.
- Levels of volunteering.
- Levels of community participation in local festivals and events.

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

- Tracking progress of actions contained in this Plan – implementation rates (ongoing).
- Regular (biennial) tourism operator confidence surveys on Council's approach to promoting and supporting a vibrant and sustainable visitor economy in line with the vision.
- Regular community satisfaction surveys on key metrics related to our geotourism aspirations (e.g. satisfaction with the local environment; attractiveness of natural places; liveability).
- Regular visitor satisfaction surveys on the destination's products and experiences.

This Plan will be reviewed annually to ensure that implementation progress informs ongoing operational planning and delivery. Continual monitoring and reporting on progress will ensure that destination management planning priorities reflect the key challenges and opportunities of the day.







CONTACT US

PO Box 61, Glen Innes, NSW 2370

(02) 6730 2300

council@gisc.nsw.gov.au

www.gisc.nsw.gov.au

