



MINUTES OF THE TOURISM & ECONOMIC ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

commencing at 5pm on

WEDNESDAY 28 JUNE 2023

Minnamurra Rainforest Centre
345 Minnamurra Falls Road, Jamberoo

**MINUTES OF THE
TOURISM AND ECONOMIC ADVISORY COMMITTEE
HELD AT MINNAMURRA RAINFOREST
ON WEDNESDAY 28 JUNE 2023 AT 5PM**

PRESENT: Councillor Matt Brown (Chair), Councillor Warren Steel, Craig Hardy, Cameron McDonald, Anthony Body and Leah Hill

IN ATTENDANCE: Sally Bursell – Manager Tourism and Events
Robert Spinks – Economic Development Coordinator

OBSERVER: Councillor Mark Croxford
Kane Weeks – Regional Director, National Parks (5pm – 6pm)

1 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from member Kate Mather and CEO, Jane Stroud.

2 ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF TRADITIONAL OWNERS

The Chair declared the meeting open and acknowledged the traditional owners:

“On behalf of those present, I would like to acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of Dharawal Country, the Wodi Wodi people and recognise their continued connection to the land. We pay our respects to elders past, present and emerging and the contribution that they make to our community.”

Due to the Committee’s new scope of including economic development in addition to tourism and events, as well as the invited guests in attendance, upon the Chair’s suggestion, each attendee provided a brief introduction.

Councillor Croxford noted he was in attendance due to his interest in local economic development issues and Kane Weeks, was invited to address the committee with regard to the refurbished Minnamurra Rainforest Centre and potential for collaboration with Council.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

Cameron McDonald advised that due to his involvement in the proposed Indian Mela (festival) and the associated application submitted for Destination Event Funding, he would not be contributing to discussions on this item.

3 BUSINESS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

There were two exceptions to the minutes of the meeting of 1 May 2023.

Exception 1:

Clr Stuart Larkins amended the Committee's resolution relating to Bombo Stairs (item 14.2) and to this end, was merely "noted" by Council, not "accepted".

Resolution

23/001TEAC

Resolved that the Tourism and Economic Advisory Committee:

1. Accept the amendment to the minutes of 1 May 2023 by Councillor Larkins, noting the Tourism Advisory Committee request Council staff engage Indigenous Elders to determine an appropriate name for the newly constructed stairs at Bombo. The suggested name for consultation from the Tourism Advisory Committee is "Thunda"; and call for a date of an official opening.
2. Support negotiations between Council and Indigenous Elders to arrive at a name for the newly constructed stairs at Bombo Quarry.
3. Call for a date of an official opening.

(Councillor Steel and Member Hardy)

Exception 2:

Unintentionally omitted from the minutes of 1 May 2023 was a discussion the committee had on an opportunity for an event in the Kiama Harbour precinct involving non-motorised boats. The committee believed it to be a good business case to invite event organisers to consider an event of this nature.

Resolution

23/002TEAC

Resolved that the Tourism and Economic Advisory Committee distribute a media release to support an event concept and invites event organisers to express interest in running an event that utilises the Kiama Harbour and Black Beach area that involves different styles of non-motorised boats such as Polynesian style boats, surf boats, dragon boats and outrigger boats.

(Members Hill and McDonald)

Kane Weeks, a guest of the committee, addressed the group, providing a broad summary of the recent history of the Minnamurra Rainforest Centre:

- Prior to the \$5M upgrade, Kane described the elevated boardwalk as rotten and in a state of disrepair and the Visitor Centre building water logged and the degree of mould, again making things unable to be repaired.
- The funding upgrade allowed for a state-of-the art multipurpose building, with commercial kitchen that could be used for a number of uses including weddings,

events and art shows/museum whilst also facilitating the numerous school groups the Centre hosts. National Parks attempted to lease the building, with little interest, and then the COVID pandemic occurred.

- An additional \$3.8M was sought to repair the damage to the rainforest walk, seeing the installation of a stainless steel fabrication designed to last 70 years.
- Currently, the Minnamurra Rainforest Centre utilises the upgraded building to house a visitors centre and a classroom for school excursions. The commercial kitchen remains empty.
- Approximatey 170,000 people visit each each year. In summer, the facility is at capacity, but a challenge exists in continuing visitor flow through winter. For this reason National Parks are revisiting the original objective to lease the entire building, with the highest priority a viable tenant to manage the kitchen/café space.
- Outside of the building itself, First Nation small group tours is seen as a feasible option for product development. With also an opportunity to host a small and non-permanent, glamping style accommodation on a small, previously cleared, section of land within the rainforest. This too, could provide an incentive for the right tenant.

Resolution

23/003TEAC

Resolved that the Tourism and Economic Advisory Committee support the vision of Minnamurra Rainforest Centre, within Budderoo National Park, to extend its current operations by attracting a suitable tenant to lease the multipurpose building, including the on-site commercial kitchen, and look at other ways to improve the usage over winter and overall financial viability, in order for it to continue to be one of the area's premier visitor attractions.

(Councillor Steel and Member Hill)

Kane Weeks left the meeting 6pm.

4 REPORTS FOR INFORMATION

4.1 Economic Development Report – June 2023

Responsible Officer: Robert Spinks | Economic Development Coordinator

- 4.1.1 Robert provided the Committee details on the current regional, and State level economic development strategies in place and advised the Committee that one of the first tasks was to develop a local Kiama Economic Development Strategic Plan (this was last compiled in 2014).

The new Manager Planning and Economic Development, Cheryl Lapin, began in her role today, 28 June and will be in attendance at a subsequent Committee meeting.

- 4.1.2 The new TEDAC Terms of Reference were distributed to the Committee.

4.1.3 Robert will be attending the Regional Economic Development Strategy Forum, scheduled by the Illawarra Shoalhaven Joint Organisation (ISJO) on 17 July 2023.

4.1.4 The Committee discussed the current issue the taxis and ride share in the local area, following the closure of Kiama Cabs. Illawarra Taxi Network are now able to accept a 'booked car service', however are not permitted to collect from taxi ranks in the local area or hailed. Robert explained that a letter had been written from the Mayor to request approval to overcome this.

Resolution

23/004TEAC

Resolved that the Tourism and Economic Advisory Committee write to the State Government to:

1. Support the Point to Point Commissioner, Anthony Wing's proposed reforms of taxi and ride share in NSW, allowing any taxi or ride share vehicle to collect from taxi ranks and permit them to accept customer hails.
2. Request the Department provide a timeframe on when the new reform will be established

(Member Hardy and Councillor Steel)

4.1.5 The Committee discussed the topic of Agritourism and the recent combined investment from Destination Sydney Surround South (DSSS) and ISJO to commission Sparrowly Group work with Council representatives to identify product development opportunities locally.

Robert is currently investigating existing barriers to Council's ability to effect the Agritourism reforms, due to current land zoning.

Resolution

23/005TEAC

Resolved that the Tourism and Economic Advisory Committee support Agritourism in the local area to enable regional business opportunities to generate additional income, diversify operations that attract new visitor markets and preserve the area green rolling hills. To this end, look to eliminating barriers that exist via local zoning permissions.

(Member McDonald and Councillor Steel)

4.2 Tourism and Events Report – June 2023.

Responsible Officer: Sally Bursell | Manager Tourism and Events

4.2.1 Setting Priorities – Partner Workshop

Following the Local Tourism Survey, almost 40 respondents indicated that they would like to participate in a workshop with a purpose to discuss further and feed into refining the Kiama Tourism and Events Action Plan.

Sparrowly Group have been appointed to facilitate the workshop on 27 July with Kiama residents and business owners invited to attend. A report will be collated and distributed to the Committee prior to changes being made to the Action Plan.

4.2.2 Destination Kiama finished the financial year with 215 partners. 64 at a platinum level, and 151 business. It was reported that this is a fairly static number with the 2021/22 financial year seeing 213 partnerships.

The Partnership Prospectus for 2023/24 is being revised ready for the new financial year. The price of \$120 for a business partnership and \$295 for platinum level remains the same, however we have a goal to attract 250 partners.

Leah Hill agreed to assist the Visitor Information Centre staff in attracting new partners in a bid to reach the goal of 250 partners.

Resolution

23/006TEAC

Resolved that the Tourism and Economic Advisory Committee member, Leah Hill accept the role of ambassador, assisting in the recruitment of new Destination Kiama partners

(Members Body and Hardy)

4.2.3 Sally advised the Committee that a new festival has been proposed for Old School Flat in Kiama for Sunday 5 November 2023. The Indian Mela (festival) will attract up to 2,000 people to Kiama to celebrate Indian culture and cuisine. The organisers, Cameron McDonald and Tom Oxley are working closely with the owners of JJ's Indian Restaurant and (soon to be local) Dr Arunima Gupta who is very involved in the Wollongong Indian community to ensure an appropriate event delivery.

The Indian Consul General Mr Manish Gupta has been invited, and the organising committee is meeting this coming weekend to discuss the preferred food vendors/performers and marketing material.

Anthony Body suggested that the Department of Regional NSW may be able to assist with connections to multicultural organisations, and university representatives to assist in further developing the event.

This event has a submitted application for round one of Destination Event Funding.

- 4.2.4 Sally provided an overview of the proposed new *Signature Community Events Funding Program* which seeks to support local community events with intents, purposes and goals outside of tourism and economic growth.

This program and supporting documentation, including program guidelines and scoring criteria has been presented to Council's executive committee for endorsement. Provided it is accepted, events such as Kiama Jazz and Blues Festival and the Kazador will be invited to submit applications.

- 4.2.5 The Tourism and Events team have been working on the Kiama Walking Guide refresh. This will be printed mid July, with a closer Destination Kiama brand alignment, new imagery and information updates. Councillor Steel requested that the new Bombo Stairs are noted in the update.

Working with a consultant from Bicycle NSW, the Tourism and Events team are also producing a new Cycling Guide for the area. The consultant has been a guest of the Kiama Bicycle User Group on a number of rides around the area and will be working in conjunction with them to ensure accuracy.

The guide will feature easy to moderate graded cycling options around the Municipality and be designed for recreational riders.

It was suggested that the new owner of Kiama Cycles and Sports is invited to the next committee meeting.

- 4.2.6 The Committee discussed the recent involvement of Aboriginal Experience Company, Gumaraa, and Council, commending their product development and willingness to engage in tourism initiatives.

Craig Hardy mentioned a current side project he is working on to produce an 'overlay' to the Kiama Coast Walk that offers information on Aboriginal history, and locations of significance along the way. He has met with various local Aboriginal representatives including Uncle Richard.

Sally will put Craig in touch with Council's Aboriginal Liaison Officer, Sharon Randall.

- 4.2.7 The Committee discussed the positive Visitor Information Centre statistics presented in the report and wished to pass on commendation to all of the staff and volunteers at the Centre.

Craig Hardy expressed his desire to host the Visitor Centre Volunteers for lunch or dinner at Yves with his compliments to say 'thank you for the great work'.

5 STANDARD REPORTS

5.1 Destination Event Funding Program - Application Assessment

23/007TEAC

Resolved that the Tourism and Economic Advisory Committee endorse the assessment report provided by the Internal Assessment Panel and the funding (both financial and in-kind) nominated for each successful application of round one of the Destination Event Funding Program.

(Member Hill and Councillor Steel)

The Committee were presented the recommendation report and assessment matrix delivered by the Internal Assessment Panel for the Destination Event Funding Program. The report was reviewed in detail, line by line.

A discussion was had on eligibility of event application number 8 - *Kiama Music & Arts present a Terry Christmas featuring The Terrys and friends* due to the proposed date of Christmas Eve and Boxing Day, a period of time that accommodation is historically at capacity. Counter arguments were based on the 'local nature' of the event. The organisers are locals, the band they are showcasing, *The Terrys* are a successful local band and the event provides entertainment for the visitors already in town.

The Committee also discussed some of the funding amounts that were suggested, however, in the end, came to a consensus that they agreed with each of the recommendations provided in the report.

6 GENERAL BUSINESS

Nil.

7 CLOSURE

There being no further business the meeting closed at 7:30pm.

These Minutes were confirmed at the Ordinary Meeting of Council held on 18 July 2023.

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Chair