

Byron Shire Sustainable Visitation Strategy

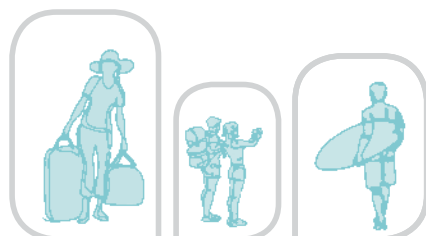
2020 - 2030



Community Solutions Panel Briefing Book

May 2019

**TALKING
FUTURE
TOURISM**



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What actions can Council take to align visitor behaviour with community values?

We are looking at ways Byron Shire can become a leading values driven, environmentally, culturally and economically responsible sustainable tourist destination. What actions can Council take to align visitor behaviour with community values?

Again – thank you for getting involved in this important project.

Acknowledgement of Country

In the preparation of this document Council acknowledges and pays respect to the Bundjalung of Byron Bay – Arakwal People as Traditional Custodians of the land within Byron Shire, and form part of the wider Aboriginal Nation known as the Bundjalung.

In addition, Council acknowledges and respects the Widjabal and Minjungbal people as Traditional Custodians within the Byron Shire.

Council acknowledges the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People who now reside within the area.



Accessibility

If you would like to receive this publication in an alternative format, please contact 02 6626 7000.

Byron Shire Council's Tourism Team would like to thank all contributors to this process including Councillors, industry stakeholders, the 1200 members of the community that contributed their opinion, RPS Group, Truth Serum Research, GeeBee Design and Byron Shire Council Executive and staff. We would also like to thank the Councils of Waverley, Shoalhaven and Noosa for working with us to raise the quality of tourism research, product and reporting.

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Welcome from the Mayor

On behalf of Councillors and staff, thank you very much for agreeing to be a member of this important panel. Your views and input will be very valuable as we work on the development of the Byron Shire Sustainable Visitation Strategy – our 10 year plan.

There's no denying that tourism has an enormous impact on our community. It's a big issue and you only need to look at the response we have had to our kitchen table discussions, with more than 1,200 people taking the time to share their views, to see that there is a very strong interest in the future of tourism in the Byron Shire.

Last year more than two million people visited the Byron Shire and their presence created more than \$450 million in our local economy. The tourism and hospitality sector also generated some 3,500 jobs. It's our biggest industry.

But – talk to locals about the congestion on our roads, the impact of all the extra cars, the lack of affordable long-term accommodation, a sense of loss of 'community' and there's real concern and frustration among our residents.

It's no secret that Council and the community are struggling to keep up with the impact of growing visitor numbers and for this reason we all need to stop and think about what we want the next ten years to look like.

One thing we do know is that tourism is not going to go away and the development of this Sustainable Visitation Strategy is our chance to acknowledge the positive things



tourism brings to our Shire, but importantly it gives us all the opportunity to try to make sure that from now on we work towards a sustainable tourism industry – one that has a low impact on the environment, supports and respects our local culture and community while providing jobs and a living for the sector.

Key to the success of this panel is that you come to it with an open mind and a willingness to use critical thinking to make recommendations about shaping the future of tourism in the Byron Shire.

Again – thank you for getting involved in this important project.

Simon Richardson
Mayor of Byron Shire Council

Section 1

Introduction

1a. Background

Tourism is a key industry within the Byron Shire economy – in 2016/2017 Tourism and Hospitality generated 23% of Byron Shire’s jobs (3,506 jobs) and 14.1% of output/sales (\$463M) in 2016/2017. More than 2 million tourists visit the Shire every year. As a sector it is Byron Shire’s largest employer.

It is important however to acknowledge the impact that this significant growth of tourism places on our community.

We know that tourism is a key priority for the Byron Shire community – we’ve heard this consistently through recent Kitchen Table Discussions, workshops and focus groups. Our community is passionate about tourism, completing over 1,200 surveys on key issues brought about by the exponential growth in tourism, and providing feedback and suggestions on how to work through solutions.

We’ve also heard that there is a desire for more community-led decision making and that is why a Community Solutions Panel has been brought together. The findings from these activities are presented in this briefing book.

1b. What is a Community Solutions Panel?

A Community Solutions Panel is a group of 30 randomly selected Byron Shire residents and/or rate payers who are representative of the broader community. Council has engaged an independent company, RPS Group to bring this Panel together and facilitate the group.

This process of involving the wider community in decision making has been tried and has proven successful in Byron Shire.

You have a unique opportunity, as a representative member of this Community Solutions Panel, to help shape the future of tourism in the Shire over the next ten years.

1c. Your Role as a Panel Member and What to Expect

Each Panel member receives this briefing book which includes key findings and outcomes from the recent community Kitchen Table Discussions, workshops and focus groups held with and/or submitted by individuals, community groups, visitors and Council staff.

Please use this briefing book as the foundation for your information and knowledge.

From these findings and recommendations the Panel will discuss key issues brought about by the exponential growth of tourism. You will also have the opportunity to request presentations from expert ‘witnesses’ to address areas where you feel you require more information.

If at any time you feel you require additional information to inform your discussion, please ask. Staff will have a library of documents and reports available at our Panel sessions and online.

At the end of the process, the Panel will produce its own report. In the report the Panel will address the question posed at the start of this book, and prioritise solutions and actions which will be presented to Council to be considered during the development of the 10 year Sustainable Visitation Strategy (SVS).

The format, structure and means of presenting your solutions and actions will be up to you and guided by The RPS Group, but it is important that they are clear, measurable, actionable, realistic and timely and within Council's remit to deliver or influence.

We are looking at ways Byron Shire can become a leading values driven, environmentally, culturally and economically responsible sustainable tourist destination.

As a member of the Community Solutions Panel you are asked to consider and prioritise solutions and actions on the following question:

What actions can Council take to align visitor behaviour with community values?

1d. Critical Thinking

You will be participating in a deliberative process. Deliberation involves both dialogue and debate and requires access to a wide array of information as well as an equal share of voices.

The Panel deliberation will be built on a foundation of critical thinking.

The RPS Group has worked extensively with processes like this Panel to achieve deliberation and knows it is a successful way to foster learning, discussion and deep consideration. Deliberation is the complete opposite to an opinion poll. Instead of a four-minute telephone call, you will be involved in an in-depth, in-person process with a group of randomly selected members of the community to consider your given topic and provide recommendations to Council.

In Australia and around the world, these processes have become recognised for their capacity to deliver outcomes that are trusted by the broader community. They work because they can convey to the wider community that everyday people like them are being given complete access to information, are studying detailed evidence and hearing from subject-matter experts of their own choosing.

In criminal trials, community trust is placed in a jury's verdict, without every citizen looking at each piece of evidence, because a trusted group of citizens was given sufficient time and access to information – and was free from outside influences (or even the perception of such influences).

You will generate the same trust in your task by applying critical thinking, and that is something we all do on a day to day basis, perhaps without even realising it. Your challenge will be to bring that same skill to your time as a Panellist, thinking about clarity of information, its relevance to the issues and the depth it goes into. You will need to consider the accuracy of materials, and whether the information you have is broad enough to address the question; and of course, whether it is all logical to you.

We will spend time in the first Panel session exploring some ways that you can, as a group, ensure you are applying critical thinking in your approach, and we'll provide you with materials that will support you throughout the process.

1e. What is a Sustainable Visitation Strategy?

The Sustainable Visitation Strategy ensures that our values, environment, culture and economy are considered during the development of the 10 year strategy.

Our Byron Shire Sustainable Visitation Strategy must:

- Reflect the values that the community wants to see from visitors and the industry.
- Strike a balance between private benefits and the wide-ranging scope of community expectations.
- Explore community understanding of the visitor economy and how this works in the delivery of every day and core services.
- Explore ways that Council can respond to and influence the visitor economy and future tourism growth.
- Understand the community's vision for the visitor economy and Council's ability to deliver.

1f. Why a Sustainable Visitation Strategy?

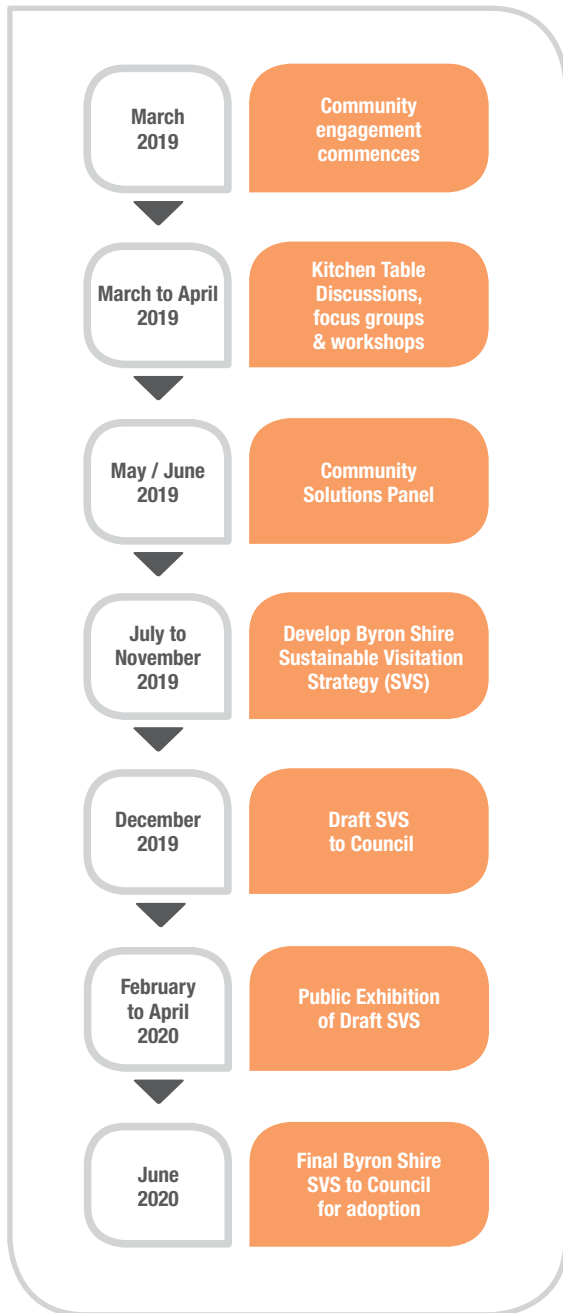
Our community has told us that sustainability is a priority, so we need a tourism plan that enables Council to deliver this. A Sustainable Visitation Strategy introduces the concept of sustainable tourism as a basis for decision-making within Byron Shire. The outcome will be actions that aim to maximise the benefits to environment, community, culture and business while minimising negative impacts of over-tourism. Many environmentally sensitive Councils in Australia are moving to a Sustainable Visitation framework which is administered and certified by the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC). For more information on the GSTC and the 41 criteria go to www.gstccouncil.org/gstc-criteria/gstc-destination-criteria/.

The four key destination standards covering the 41 different criteria are:

1. Demonstrate sustainable destination management.
2. Maximise economic benefits to the host community and minimise economic impacts.
3. Maximise benefits to communities, visitors, and culture and minimise negative impacts.
4. Maximise benefits to the environment and minimise negative impacts.

The natural influx of visitors to the Shire has had a range of positive and negative impacts for our local community. Council holds a strong position on sustainability and wishes to extend this to tourism management in order to achieve a balance between the needs of residents, businesses and visitors. Community engagement is key to the development of the Strategy. Council has run a number of engagement activities including Kitchen Table Discussions, online forums, workshops, focus groups and all culminating in a Community Solutions Panel.

1g. Timeline for Delivery of the Sustainable Visitation Strategy



1h. Community Solutions Panel Meeting Dates and Times:

Meeting 1:

Saturday 25th May 2019

Time: 7:45am-2:30pm
Cavanbah Centre,
Ewingsdale Road, Ewingsdale

Meeting 2:

Saturday 1st June 2019

Time: 10am-2pm
Cavanbah Centre,
Ewingsdale Road, Ewingsdale

Meeting 3:

Saturday 22nd June 2019

Time: 9:30am-2pm
Cavanbah Centre,
Ewingsdale Road, Ewingsdale

Please arrive ten minutes prior to each session.

1i. Agenda

Day 1: 25 May 2019 (7.45am-2:30pm) - Working as a Team, Data Gathering and Exploration

Time	Activity
7.45am-10.00am	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bus tour to Byron Shire Visitor Centre and Crystal Castle, Shambhala Gardens
10.00am-10.15am	Short break
10.15am-12.30pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Get to know you activity Checking in about what you know and initial information gathering activities Presentation and welcome from Council Exercises about how we're going to work together Explore what solutions are, what the charge is, what Council's remit is
12.30pm-1.00pm	Lunch
1.00pm-2.30pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand outcomes from Kitchen Table Discussions Book Discuss possible solutions Prepare questions for next week; who do we want to hear from? What other information do we need?

Day 2: 1 June 2019 (10am-2pm) - Data Gathering and Solutions

Time	Activity
10.00am-12.30pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reconnect with each other Discuss what critical thinking is Guest speaker experts present Panellists ask speakers questions, take notes and discuss
12.30pm-1.00pm	Lunch
1.00pm-2.00pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Panellists develop initial solutions and test feasibility of these

Day 3: 22 June 2019 (9.30am-2pm) - Solutions and Actions

Time	Activity
9:30am-12.30pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revisit and refine solutions, actions and recommendations
12.30pm-1.00pm	Lunch
1.00pm-2.00pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build the action plan Celebration and stipends handed out

1j. Who You'll be Working With

Rachel Fox **Lead Facilitator**



Rachel has more than twenty years' experience of delivering stakeholder and community engagement programs for state and local government, the not-for-profit sector, and in a consultancy environment. She has expertise gained from working on major projects in the transport, health, energy sectors, and for urban renewal programs and developments.

Rachel is a skilled strategist and analyst, adept at navigating complex stakeholder issues for large-scale government organisations, and publicly-contentious infrastructure and redevelopment projects.

She is an accomplished facilitator and interviewer - comfortable working with community members and senior executives – with an ability to lead group discussions to clear and mutually understood conclusions.

Merryn Spencer **Project Support**



Merryn is an accomplished community engagement specialist with extensive experience working complex stakeholders across the arts and local government sectors.

She has worked closely with stakeholders and appreciates the importance of relationships and how they reflect the level of trust and respect between parties.

She previously worked at the City of Parramatta, leading the Research and Consultation team and has excellent knowledge of the area and stakeholders involved. Merryn is organised, focussed and has a passion for delivering high quality work. Merryn will provide day to day management of this project.



Section 2

Our Community

2a. Demographic Data

Beautiful natural surroundings, friendly and accepting people and an alternative community consciousness make Byron Shire unique. Our Shire is the traditional home of the Arakwal people from the Bundjalung nation on the far north coast of NSW. We share our boundaries with the Tweed, Lismore and Ballina Local Government Areas in a region known as the Northern Rivers. Covering an area of 556 km², Byron Shire is famous for its beaches, hinterland and villages and regarded for our creativity, sustainability and a relaxed lifestyle.

Our population of 31, 571 (ABS 2016) is diverse and colourful including surfers, professionals, farmers and those committed to alternative lifestyles and philosophies. We love living and working in the same area, with almost 75% of people working in the Byron Shire also living here. We are from a range of industries, including retail, health, businesses run from home and our farms. We are diverse - 18% of our population is overseas born, higher than the regional average.



We are embracing transport alternatives; 903 people ride their bike to work and another 1822 people work from home. Only 48% of households have access to two or more motor vehicles which is less than the regional average.

We are educated and embrace life-long learning. Nearly a quarter of our adults have a bachelor or higher degree, well above the regional average. In terms of emerging trends, there are a smaller percentage of residents who do not have any qualifications at all as compared to the Australian average. We love to learn yoga, languages, comedy, permaculture and art.

We are living with fewer people in bigger places. The most dominant household type consists of two people, and dwellings with three bedrooms are the most common type. This also highlights a lack of opportunity to downsize, so we stay in our homes longer.

We have some residents who live comfortably; 13% of households earn an income of \$2,500 or more per week.

We still have vulnerable communities who need assistance. Our homeless person estimated population is 327, and 4.4% of the population needs help in their day to day lives due to disability.

Table 1 provides a snapshot of some key demographic data, with comparisons to regional NSW, NSW and Australia.

Table 1: Key demographic data in Byron Shire in 2016

	Byron Shire 2016	Regional NSW	New South Wales	Australia
Median age	44	43	38	38
Median weekly household income	\$1,141	\$1,166	\$1,481	\$1,431
Couples with children	21%	25%	32%	30%
Older couples without children	8%	13%	10%	10%
Medium and high density housing	15%	17%	33%	27%
Households with a mortgage	24%	29%	30%	32%
Median weekly rent	\$414	\$278	\$384	\$339
Households renting	27%	26%	30%	29%
Non-English speaking backgrounds	7.4%	5.8%	21%	17.9%
University attendance	3%	3%	5%	5%
Bachelor or higher degree	24%	14%	23%	22%
Vocational	19%	24%	18%	19%
Unemployment	6.6%	6.62%	6.3%	6.9%
SEIFA* index disadvantage	976.6	968.6	995.8	1002

Source: ID Profile data

* Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) is a product developed by the Australian Bureau of Statistics that ranks areas in Australia according to relative socio-economic advantage and disadvantage, based on information from the five-yearly census. A low score indicates relative disadvantage.

Table 2 shows the age structure of Byron Shire, reflecting the typical life-stages and how these have changed over the five year period from 2011 to 2016.

Table 2: Age structure - Service age groups Byron Shire - Total persons (Usual residence)

Service age group (years)	2016		2011	
	Number	Population %	Number	Population %
Babies and pre-schoolers (0 to 4)	1,553	4.9	1,643	5.6
Primary schoolers (5 to 11)	2,658	8.4	2,580	8.8
Secondary schoolers (12 to 17)	2,148	6.8	2,324	8.0
Tertiary education and independence (18 to 24)	1,740	5.5	1,774	6.1
Young workforce (25 to 34)	3,390	10.7	2,838	9.7
Parents and homebuilders (35 to 49)	6,768	21.4	6,833	23.4
Older workers and pre-retirees (50 to 59)	5,240	16.6	5,312	18.2
Empty nesters and retirees (60 to 69)	4,840	15.3	3,324	11.4
Seniors (70 to 84)	2,541	8.1	2,022	6.9
Elderly aged (85 and over)	687	2.2	559	1.9
TOTAL	31,565	100.0	29,209	100.0

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census of Population and Housing 2011 and 2016.
Compiled and presented by .id, the population experts. <http://www.id.com.au>

From 2011 to 2016, parents and homebuilders in the 35 to 49 year old age group remained the predominant age group, at 23.4% in 2011 with a slight decrease to 21.4% in 2016. This service group is followed by older workers and pre-retirees who are 50 to 59 years old at 16.6% of the population in 2016.

The 25 to 34 year old age group increased by over 500 people in the Shire over the 5 year period; the young workforce representing 10.7% of the Byron Shire population.

In 2016, more than two million people visited the Byron Shire, making it one of the country's most popular destinations for domestic and international tourists. Our population has gradually increased over the years – but has remained steady over the past five years with an estimated variance of about 1% each year.

2b. Community Profile

Byron Shire can be seen as a community of towns and villages. Each town and village has its unique character and offerings, which collectively contribute to the culture of Byron Shire. An important part of understanding the needs and aspirations of the individual communities which form the Shire, is to have active participation by locals in decision making and planning processes.

Our main towns and villages are:

- Ocean Shores, New Brighton and South Golden Beach (Population: 6298)
- Byron Bay (Population: 4229)
- Mullumbimby (Population: 3781)
- Bangalow (Population: 1807)
- Brunswick Heads (Population: 1630)



Ocean Shores, New Brighton & South Golden Beach

Located north of Byron Bay, the quite eclectic villages of Ocean Shores, New Brighton and South Golden Beach cover the largest urban area of the Shire and are home to a mix of newcomers attracted from all over the world, as well as those who have lived in the district all of their lives. The hilly nature of the area allows all aspects of the natural environment to be appreciated, with various places benefitting beach and hinterland outlooks. Many residents have fantastic canal and nature reserve views supporting a growing interest in water leisure and sporting activities and art amongst the community. More and more tourists are visiting Ocean Shores for its services and amenities due to its proximity to the North Byron Parklands; a 660 acre cultural arts and music events venue at Yelgun, renown for events such as Splendour in the Grass and Falls Music & Arts Festival.

Ocean Shores and surrounding villages do not have traditional accommodation properties, however in the last 10 years, with the North Byron Parklands event site, there has been a significant rise in the number of holiday houses in the area.

Byron Bay

Byron Bay is an iconic coastal town characterised by spectacular beaches and coastline. For such a significant tourist destination within the Shire, it has maintained relatively low density urban places with a compact, walkable commercial centre and a predominance of one and two storey development in residential areas with three storeys in the business area. The sensitive coastal environment with hazards and flooding, has influenced how the town has expanded over the years. Byron Bay itself attracts tourists due to the natural environment, laid-back culture, shopping, eateries and nightlife as well as its identity as a haven for celebrities.

Byron Bay has a strong mix of accommodation options, with a whopping 57% of bed spaces in the Shire. The accommodation mix includes motels, apartments, resorts, hotels, holiday houses, caravan and holiday parks, home stays and guest houses.

Mullumbimby

About twenty kilometres north of Byron Bay via the Pacific Highway is Mullumbimby, situated on the Brunswick River.

Mullumbimby is known as “The Biggest Little Town in Australia”, holding a steadfast role as a key service provider not only for town residents but surrounding rural areas. The town has a variety of cafes, colourful shops, interesting buildings, attractive parks, a swimming pool and a museum, with regular farmers and community markets also attracting residents and visitors alike.

The inclusive community enjoys joining forces to find alternative and practical solutions to any issues that may arise. More recent concerns such as the cost of housing, caring for the less fortunate, threats to the live music scene and access to renewable energy and local produce has seen the community successfully respond with the establishment of community and business enterprises.

Mullumbimby has also seen a rise in its accommodation stock of holiday houses to cater for the increase in visitor numbers to Byron Shire.

Bangalow

Bangalow is a unique rural community situated in some of the State’s richest farmland. With its ‘Federation’ influences and stunning surrounding scenery, Bangalow also attracts tourists to its range of eclectic, individual and unique stores, as well as local arts and crafts. Bangalow is a very popular day tripper destination in Byron Shire.

Many residents see the village’s heritage appeal as a gift, expressing caution when it comes to change. In this way, Bangalow does not have any traditional tourist accommodation such as hotels or motels, but does have some guest houses and holiday homes in the surrounding hinterland.

The regular community and farmers’ markets as well as inaugural festivals and events such as the annual Billycart Derby, Taste and Christmas Eve festival appeal to visitors and residents and reflect the heritage charm of the area.

Brunswick Heads

Brunswick Heads is a small yet resilient seaside township situated in an area of natural beauty alongside the coast. The natural landscape, made up of beaches, rivers and green spaces, dominates and shapes the area and the community over time has developed around this, delivering a varied and compatible range of architectural styles, materials, landscapes and streetscapes. With much to offer as a family-friendly coastal village it hosts events such as the Christmas time Fish 'n' Chips Festival, Old and Gold Festival and has local community facilities and services.

Over 10 years ago, the village launched a 'Simple Pleasures' tourism campaign to attract daytrippers and overnight visitors to the area to enjoy surfing, swimming, fishing, nature watching and in turn visitors frequent the changing landscape of alfresco cafes and restaurants.

Brunswick Heads' accommodation has remained relatively stable over the past 10 years. The accommodation mix includes a hotel, motels, caravan parks and holiday homes.

2c. Accommodation Summary

Early 2019 Council completed an audit of accommodation capacity throughout the Shire. The last time Council conducted this audit was in 2008, when the previous Tourism Management Plan was prepared.

The major findings shown in the table below are as follows:

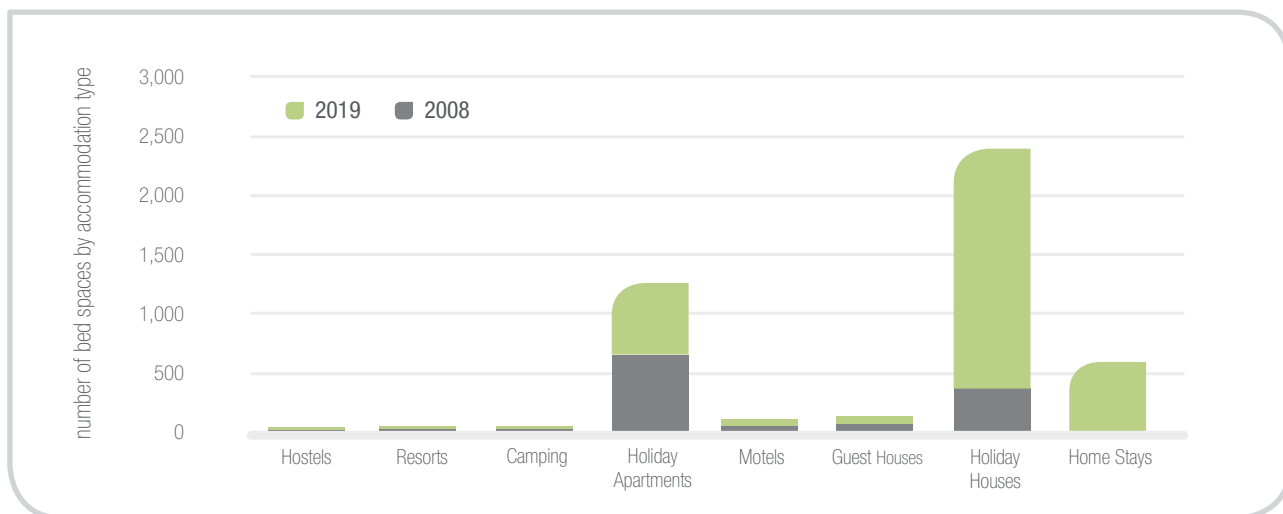
1. In 2019, Byron Shire has a capacity of 22,025 bed spaces recorded across 3,325 properties, as compared with 14,061 bed spaces in 2008. This shows a growth of 57% over the past 11 years.
2. In 2019, there are 13 camping grounds and caravan parks that account for 24% of the bed spaces.
3. In 2019, the majority of accommodation are holiday houses, which account for 40% of bed spaces.
4. From 2008 to 2019 there has been a decrease in the number of bed spaces for resorts, holiday apartments and guest houses.

Table 3: Accommodation type and number of properties and bed spaces in Byron Shire from 2008 and 2019 and the % change in the number of bed spaces during this period.

Accommodation Type	Number of Properties (2019)	Number of bed spaces (2019)	Total properties % (2019)	Total bed spaces % (2019)	Number of Properties (2008)	Number of Bed Spaces (2008)	% change in the number of bed spaces by town and village from 2008 to 2019
Hostels/Backpackers	10	1751	.5	8	11	1178	32.74%
Caravan Camping	13	5318	.5	24	13	5255	1.19%
Resorts	2	800	.4	4	9	949	-15.70%
Holiday Apartments	671	2846	20	13	615	2885	-1.36%
Hotels/Motels	29	1096	.8	5	25	890	23.15%
Guest Houses	27	228	.8	1	48	335	-31.94%
Holiday Houses	1998	8836	60	40	393	2473	257.30%
Private/Home Stays	575	1150	17	5	7	96	1097%
TOTAL	3325	22,025	100%	100%	1121	14061	56.63%

Source: Byron Shire Council Accommodation Audit 2019

Figure 1: The number of bed spaces by accommodation type comparing 2008 and 2019 data



Source: Byron Shire Council Accommodation Audit 2019

Table 4: The total number of properties and bed spaces in Byron Shire by area

Town	Number of Properties (2019)	Total # of bed spaces (2019)	Total properties % (2019)	Total bed spaces % (2019)	Number of Properties (2008)	Number of Bed Spaces (2008)	% change in the number of bed spaces by town and village from 2008 to 2019
Byron Bay	1717	14216	52	57	787	10032	41.7%
Suffolk Park	350	1645	11	9	92	1507	9.16%
Brunswick Heads	78	1238	3	3	70	1204	2.82%
Bangalow	130	550	4	4	21	135	307%
Mullumbimby	148	532	4	3	14	169	214.80%
Ocean Shores South Golden New Brighton	318	1308	10	9	48	365	258.36%
Hinterland and remaining Shire	556	2536	16	15	89	649	290.76%
TOTAL	3325	22025	100%	100%	1121	14061	56.63%

Source: Byron Shire Council Accommodation Audit 2019

The major findings shown in the table above are as follows:

1. Byron Bay has the highest percentage of properties in Byron Shire, with 14,216 bed spaces totalling 52% of the total properties and 57% of the total bed spaces in the Shire in 2019.
2. The number of bed spaces in Suffolk Park and Brunswick Heads has remained stable for the last 11 years.
3. Bangalow, Mullumbimby, Ocean Shores (which also includes the villages of South Golden Beach and New Brighton) and the Hinterland areas have shown the most growth in bed spaces over the last 11 years with increases between 200 – 300%. Most of this can be attributed to the growth in the number of holiday houses in the Shire.

Section 3

Our Council

3a. How a Local Government Area works

Byron Shire Council operates under the Local Government Act NSW 1993 and is required to:

- Provide strong and effective representation, leadership, planning and decision-making.
- Carry out functions in a way that provides the best possible value for residents and ratepayers.
- Plan strategically, using the Integrated Planning and Reporting framework, for the provision of effective and efficient services and regulation to meet the diverse needs of our community.
- Apply the Integrated Planning and Reporting framework in carrying out functions to achieve desired outcomes and continuous improvements.
- Work co-operatively with other Councils and the State Government to achieve desired outcomes for our community.
- Manage lands and other assets so that current and future local community needs can be met in an affordable way.
- Work with others to secure appropriate services for local community needs.
- Act fairly, ethically and without bias in the interests of our community.
- Be responsible employers and provide a consultative, safe and supportive working environment for staff.

Council is led by the Mayor and eight councillors who provide policy framework, set strategy, monitor performance and allocate resources. Day to day management and operations is led by the General Manager, supported by three directorates – Infrastructure Services, Corporate and Community Services and Sustainable Environment and Economy.

What does Council do?

Council provides a range of services, projects and programs to the community. Some are required by legislation while others are provided to meet the needs and aspirations of our community. As a guide, the following graphic from the Byron Shire Information Brochure 2018/19 indicates that for every \$100 spent, Council invests in the activities below:



3b. Council's Tourism Remit

Many tourism issues and initiatives are the responsibility of State and Federal Government, not just Local Government (Council). To help illustrate each level of Government's responsibility in relation to tourism matters, please refer to the table below.

Please note: where a Government agency may have responsibility for approving/declining a tourism or private development within Byron Shire, Council is not be able to directly influence the type of development.

Table 5: Byron Shire Council Tourism Remit

Task/Initiative	Local Government remit	State Government remit	Federal Government remit
1. Tourism research for the community and industry	✓	✓	✓
2. Advocacy on key tourism issues to other levels of Government	✓	✓	
3. Education and marketing campaigns	✓	✓	✓
4. Assisting local groups and creating start ups such as the Byron Business Events Bureau	✓	✓	
5. Control/mandate over State infrastructure assets, such as Ewingsdale Road		✓	
6. Approve rate increases for Byron Shire		✓	
7. Council local roads, parks and open spaces	✓		
8. Crown Lands and reserves, for example Main Beach and Brunswick Heads Boat Harbour	✓	✓	
9. Development approval (however, Council can not influence what is developed, other than the planning controls that are in place, e.g. the LEP.)	✓	✓	
10. First Sun and Suffolk Park Holiday Parks	✓		
11. State significant development approval, for example North Byron Parklands		✓	
12. Management of National and Marine Parks		✓	
13. Management of waterways (Roads and Maritime Services)		✓	
14. Event liaison and event approvals	✓	✓	
15. Initiate a bed tax in Byron Shire		✓	

Section 4

Our Tourism Challenge

4a. About Tourism - Current Facts and Figures

Byron Shire has a history of over 100 years as a tourist destination. Daytrippers were first attracted to the area in the early 1900s, with camping and caravanning holidays becoming popular from the 1930s. From the 1960s surfers were attracted to our shores by the excellent surfing conditions.

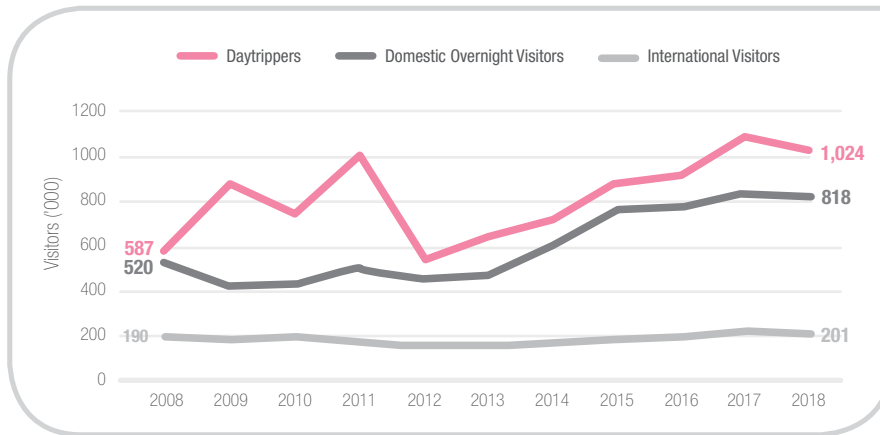
From the mid-1980s tourism and development activity increased rapidly, and in 2017/18, the Shire welcomed over 2 million visitors. The popularity of Byron Shire as a tourist destination, along with its attractiveness as a sea change locality has placed strains on the Shire's infrastructure and services. Our residents are understandably concerned about this. The tourism and business sectors also support the need for a coordinated and strategic approach to the challenges our Shire is facing.

In order to fully appreciate tourism in our Shire, here are some statistics and analysis on our tourism industry.

1. In 2016/17, Tourism and Hospitality generated 23% of Byron Shire's jobs (3,506 jobs) and 14.1% of output/sales (\$463M) in 2016/17. As a sector it is Byron Shire's largest employer.
2. Output and jobs generated by the sector were equivalent to Coffs Harbour which has an economy (\$3.24B) and population (74,641) more than double Byron Shire's (\$1.56B; 32,790).
3. In 2017/18, Byron Shire was estimated to have had more than 2 million visitors.
4. Half of Byron Shire's visitors stay overnight (domestic and international), compared to only 37% for the NSW as a whole, totalling 4 million visitor nights.
5. If the same methodology is applied to all LGAs to account for tourists within population figures, Byron Shire's 'serviceable population' would be greater than Orange, Bathurst and Lismore.
6. The cost of servicing this temporary population is estimated at \$23 million per year.
7. Recent growth has outpaced the State's. Between 2014 and 2018, total visitation to Byron Shire was estimated to have grown by 49%, compared to 11% for NSW.
8. Daytrippers increased by 74% over the last decade, and domestic overnight visitors grew by 57%.
9. Byron Shire's visitation is similar to much larger cities such as Launceston and Townsville.
10. Byron Shire has similar visitation to tourist destinations like the Great Ocean Road, but four times the amount of international visitors staying overnight.
11. Byron Shire is the 4th most visited destination in NSW and the 11th most visited in Australia amongst international visitors.
12. Ballina Byron Gateway Airport caters to half a million passengers each year and over the last five years was the fastest growing amongst Australia's top 20 airports.
13. International visitor nights are forecast to grow by 900,000 over the next decade, domestic nights by 700,000.
14. Private rental accommodation is more commonly used by visitors in Byron Shire than elsewhere in NSW. In the three years to 2016/17, 17% of domestic overnight visitors used rental properties. Byron Shire has more Airbnb listings than all but three Greater Sydney LGAs.

Substantial growth in domestic visitors

Figure 2: Visitation numbers, 2007/08 - 2017/18



Day-trippers grew by 74% in the last decade and domestic overnight visitors grew by 57%.

International visitors haven't grown by as much.

Source: Tourism Research Australia. Unpublished data from the National Visitor Survey and International Visitor Survey, 2018; Compiled by id. the population experts

International visitor nights forecast to grow by 900,000 over the next decade, domestic visitor nights by 700,000

Figure 3: Forecast international visitor growth by reason, nights

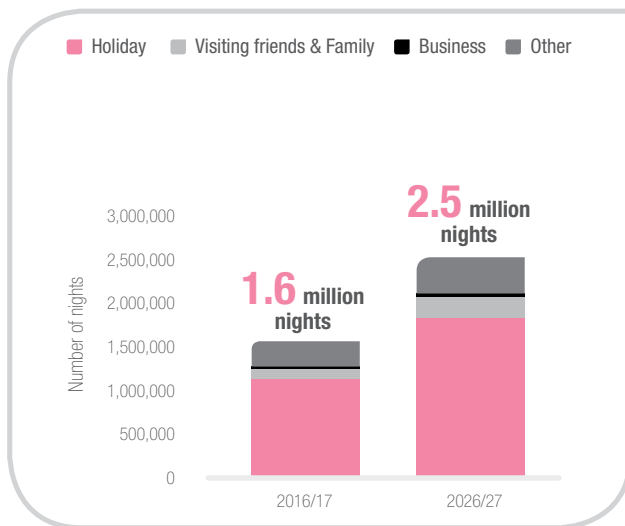
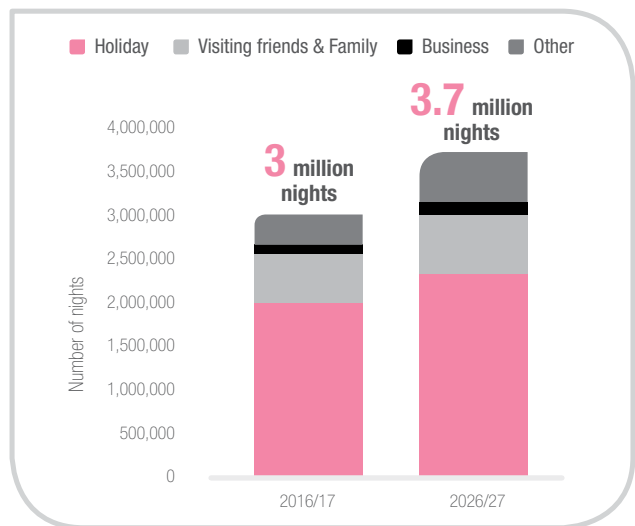


Figure 4: Forecast domestic overnight visitor growth by reason, nights



Source: TRA, Unpublished data from the International Visitor Survey, 2017; TRA, State and Territory Forecasts, 2017; Compiled by id. the population experts

4b. Tourism Budget and Events

Council is responsible for managing finances on behalf of our community, and is committed to continuous improvement, quality control and prudent financial management. Council has also been declared as being a Fit for the Future Council by the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) and the Office of Local Government.

Council generates income from a variety of sources including:

- Rates
- User charges and fees
- Grants
- Borrowings
- Investments.

Some of the funds generated through these sources are restricted in terms of how they can be used. For example, grants received must be spent in accordance with the conditions the funding is granted.

There are many areas within Council that are impacted by tourism, in particular community infrastructure, including roads, parks and toilets, waste recovery, water and sewer utilities, open spaces and so on. These areas require additional budget to maintain community assets and more open spaces are needed to keep up with the sheer number of visitors to Byron Shire

The tourism and events annual budget is outlined below.

Table 6: Annual tourism and events budget

Item	Recurrent Funding
<p>Events programs:</p> <p>Funding is allocated annually to events/festivals in the Shire to support start up events and/or embed sustainability practices into events.</p>	\$10,000
<p>Tourism Programs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Research ■ Industry memberships ■ Branding/imagery and visitor dispersal ■ Education and awareness campaigns ■ Industry development ■ Advocacy 	<p>\$20,000</p> <p>* Please note, approximately \$5000 in funding is pre-committed annually with industry memberships.</p>
Total budget program	\$30,000
<p>Tourism personnel</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 1 x full-time equivalent staff <p>Events personnel (includes licensing, film processing and working with the community and organisations on event approvals):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 2 x full-time equivalent staff 	

As you can see from the budget amounts, the tourism team's role is to collaborate with industry, apply for grant funding, provide knowledge for industry such as research and grant opportunities, deliver projects such as education and awareness campaigns, visitor dispersal strategies and product and industry development.

Over the last 3 years the tourism team has secured over \$400,000 in State and Federal grant funding. Some of the initiatives included launching Byron Shire as a key business events and conferencing destination in Australia, upgrading the Byron Visitor Centre and commencing work on the Railway Square improvement project.

4c. Emerging Trends and Drivers of Change

Tourism trends and drivers of change are sometimes difficult to predict. For example when the last tourism strategy was prepared, organisations such as Airbnb and Uber didn't exist and we could never have imagined the way these and other organisations such as Instagram and Facebook have transformed the visitor economy in Australia and around the world.

Having said that, recently two reports were released that provide some insight into future trends:

1. 2019 Global Consumer Trends in Hospitality
2. 2018/2019 Travel insights on consumer preferences in researching and choosing trips and accommodation.

The key findings from the 2019 Global Consumer Trends in Hospitality are as follows:

Trend 1 – Avoid humans at all cost

In 2019, some travellers will seek out totally automated hospitality services that involve absolutely no human contact whatsoever. Previously, removing humans would result in lower quality service; however, that's no longer the case. New automation technologies mean that hoteliers, convenience stores, supermarkets etc. can achieve lower prices and a better, novelty filled customer experience at the same time.

What does this mean for Byron Shire? Visitors will want to have 'no human contact' at accommodation check-in (like at Airbnb properties), booking all their activities online and are becoming accustomed to automated, self-serve retail. We already see the impacts on Byron Shire hospitality and more can be expected.

Trend 2 – Virtual companions

According to the research, while some tourists crave no human contact, some travellers use digital assistants, chatbots and more as artificial intelligence evolves. They will seek out virtual personalities that have the power to be their informed friend on holiday designed to entertain, educate and befriend.

What does this mean for Byron Shire? In a Shire where 'humans and the culture' are key, this will be a major challenge to our community and the industry. While time-pressed travellers may wish to avoid other people during their stay, others will welcome companionship in the form of virtual companions.

Trend 3 – Assisted development

In the future, young travellers with complex lifestyles will look to brands to teach them useful life skills, outsource daily tasks, or help them realise personal life goals. Changing social norms means many markers of adulthood – marriage, house and children – will be redundant, if not absurd for millions. However, those consumers still want to power through tasks and live rich, meaningful lives.

What does this mean for Byron Shire? Visitors to Byron Shire will be looking for more meaning during their stay. They will be looking for rich, spiritual and unique visitor experiences and opportunities to make a difference during their travels. The rise of the 'volunteer holiday' overseas is an example of how people make a difference on their holidays.

Trend 4 – Breaking bricks

According to the research, traditional brick and mortar retailers are expanding into hospitality and providing an entirely new breed of competition for traditional players. For example, in the Asia Pacific a homeware retailer opened its first hotel. Also, in London the Converse One Star Hotel was opened to promote the retailer's new footwear collection.

What does this mean for Byron Shire? The industry in Byron Shire may have to watch this trend to ensure the brands coming into Byron Shire are aligned with the community's values.

Trend 5 – Virtual try before you buy

According to the research, consumers are using their devices to summon a magic point of sale which allows travellers to engage with establishments, browse products, test and purchase in innovative new ways. For example, in June 2018 North American travel search engine KAYAK announced Kayak VR, a virtual reality app that lets users navigate and explore a city and its hotels before visiting.

What does this mean for Byron Shire? In the future, visitors will be looking to 'virtually visit', so this provides a great opportunity for industry and the community to work together to deliver the offerings of Byron Shire that are aligned with community values and demonstrates the behaviour we would like to see from visitors.

The second report on trends is the 2018/2019 Travel Insights on consumer preferences in researching and choosing trips and accommodation. The key findings from this report are as follows:

1. When researching and looking for ideas and inspiration to holiday, 85% of people used websites to do this. However, 39% of people are still looking for inspiration via word of mouth (and this is outlined more below when we talk about the effect social media has had on Byron Shire as a tourism destination).
2. When Australians are booking domestic holidays 45% are booking their flight direct with the airline and 40% are using a booking/comparison site to organise and book their accommodation
3. 26% of all respondents also find visiting friends and relatives (VFR) most appealing when going on a domestic holiday.

These trends are saying the visitor is much more discerning and will undertake their own research online and book holidays direct with accommodation providers and airlines. What is also very interesting is that many visitors are coming to visit friends and relatives (VFR) on their domestic holidays, and Byron Shire has one of the highest VFR travel rates in Australia at 37% of visitation.

Byron Shire is also grappling with the 'celebrity' effect. With a high number of high-profile celebrities, musicians and actors/actresses living in the area, many people flock to Byron Shire to catch a glimpse of the lifestyle and hope to spot their favourite celebrity on their morning swim or having their morning coffee.

The rise of Instagram and other forms of social media has also compounded the celebrity effect, with many visitors heading to Byron Shire's hot spots to have their 'selfies' taken at the Shire's key landmarks. We now see many visitors sharing their favourite holiday snaps and also 'checking-in' or hash-tagging Byron Shire, which has led to an increased awareness of Byron Shire as a holiday destination.

Over the last 10 years Byron Shire has continued to be a favourite sea-change destination. There are many professionals who have now moved to Byron Shire who are working from home and regularly commuting to capital cities for work. This trend has been captured and explained further in the demographic profile of the community (outlined in section 2).

4d. Best Practice Sustainable Tourism Management

There are many destinations that have strong elements of sustainable tourism management however, there are two examples of destinations within Australia that are leaders; Kangaroo Island in South Australia and Noosa in Queensland. Both destinations, although quite different, include strong liaison with its local community.

Tourism Kangaroo Island

According to Tourism Kangaroo Island, the Tourism Optimisation Management Model (TOMM) was developed to monitor the effect of tourism on Kangaroo Island from a variety of perspectives (including environmental, economic, socio-cultural and the visitor experience) in the interests of both residents and visitors.

The model is a community based initiative responsible for managing the long term sustainability of tourism on the Island. The initiative is overseen by a Management Committee with support and representatives from the community, industry and Government agencies. At the core of TOMM is a practical set of indicators that monitor tourism on Kangaroo Island. These indicators measure changes in the economic, environmental, socio cultural and experiential environments.

This tool has allowed the residents of Kangaroo Island and its visitors to thrive. TOMM has also ensured the protection of the Island's natural assets is maintained and it is clear that visitors with shared community values are attracted to the destination.

According to the 2016 ABS data, the population of Kangaroo Island is 4,702 and annual visitor numbers are 186,000 visitors per year and 570,000 visitor nights.

Tourism Noosa

Embracing innovation as an attempt to balance growth in a more sustainable and responsible way was at the heart of Tourism Noosa's focus in 2017-18. According to the 2016 ABS data, the population of the Noosa Shire is 52,149 and annual visitor numbers are 1,992,000 visitors per year and 4.7M visitor nights.

Tourism Noosa is passionate about industry and product development, environmental and eco certification programs, excellence in customer service and leading the way with sustainable events. Three of the specific 'best-practice' programs include:

1. Refresh Noosa

Refresh Noosa was launched to encourage the tourism industry to reinvest in their businesses and reinvigorate the quality of their product to improve competitiveness. 38 local suppliers were offered discounts on products and services to industry members to aid in the refresh process. A dedicated Refresh section on the visitnoosa.com.au website offers deals, information and resources for industry.

Refresh Noosa won the 2018 Queensland Tourism Industry Council Prize for Innovation in Tourism. This program also ensured that Noosa was presented professionally and to a very high standard to the visitor markets. This also contributed to their attracting the high yielding visitor, where the value of tourism to Noosa Shire is 900M, almost double Byron Shire's economic value (\$463M with a similar number of visitors). Tourism Noosa confirms that it is about increasing revenue per visitor as compared with increasing the number of visitors.

2. Welcome to Noosa

The Welcome to Noosa program is an easy to use professional development program aimed at delivering memorable experiences for Noosa visitors and local customers. The program is an online training program focused on customer service and Noosa specific content.

The program is comprised of six modules, which ranges from town and village history, visitor statistics, what's on, who are our customers and where they come from. The program allows the community and industry to be clear on who they are as a tourism destination and to lift the standard of customer service, which makes for a memorable and quality visitor experience.

3. Noosa Eco Check Program

The Noosa Eco Check program has been designed to assist businesses in implementing environmentally friendly business practices that will save businesses money and also drive Noosa in its quest to become a truly sustainable and eco-friendly destination.

The program provides a selection of easy-to-implement key actions in areas such as energy, water, waste and corporate social responsibility. Adopting a program like this in Byron Shire would allow Council and the community to deliver clean, safe, prosperous and healthy destinations for travellers to visit, live, work and play.

4e. Community Engagement to Date and Methodology

The community engagement completed to date has been undertaken in three parts:

1. Visitor Focus Groups,
2. Council staff meetings, and
3. Kitchen Table Discussions with the community.

Each engagement is explained below, together with the methodology.

Visitor Focus Groups

The overarching objective of the visitor focus groups was to understand the views and opinions from recent and potential visitors to the Byron Shire area. In particular Council wanted to understand their experiences as a visitor and reactions to the Kitchen Table Discussion topics.

The key objectives of the research were to:

1. Understand the attractions and experiences that are driving visitors to the Byron Shire region.
2. Identify recent visitor experiences to Byron Bay and surrounding areas in terms of satisfaction with accommodation, traffic, availability of services and infrastructure.
3. Explore visitor feedback to the Sustainable Visitation Strategy and the topics outlined in the Kitchen Table Discussion handbook.
4. Understand visitor expectations in relation to the culture, values and natural environment of Byron Bay and surrounding areas.

To meet the research objectives a qualitative research approach was used to explore a deeper understanding into the visitor experiences, expectations and reactions to the Kitchen Table Discussion topics.

The online qualitative focus group discussions were conducted amongst a representative sample of recent visitors to Byron Shire and potential visitors who are planning to travel to Byron Shire in the next 12 months.

- The focus groups were hosted over a four- hour period from 6pm to 10pm on Thursday 7 March 2019.
- 25 visitors participated in the online focus groups, which is equivalent to three focus groups.
- Participants provided detailed responses to topics and probing questions.
- The whiteboard in the online forum allowed for sharing of the visual elements from the Kitchen Table Discussion Book which stimulated discussion.

Byron Shire Council Staff Feedback

Over a four week period, the tourism team spoke with over 20 different areas of Council in meetings to discuss how tourism impacts their role. It is recognised that staff are often at the coal-face of tourism related issues and are called on to solve a wide variety of issues on a daily basis or via annual planning. Part of this feedback included staff recommendations on what policies, procedures or new ideas could be implemented (within Council's remit) to mitigate these impacts.

Kitchen Table Discussions

Kitchen Table Discussions were informal opportunities for the community to discuss and explore, with friends, relatives, colleagues and peers, important tourism issues in a structured way, and to capture and provide feedback to Council. Council wanted to hear the community's ideas, suggestions and/or solutions on key tourism issues in the Shire.

The important distinction with the Kitchen Table Discussion was that Council was not looking for a 'vote', consensus or for the community to persuade each other to their point of view. The community may indeed agree with each other on some tourism issues or hold quite different views on others – that is okay. We acknowledge that we are a diverse and varied community who is engaged and passionate about where we live.

The list of topics for discussion came from a number of sources including the 2018-28 Byron Shire Council Community Strategic Plan community engagement, tourism workshops in May 2018 and the Sustainable Visitation Strategy criteria and they also included a couple of the current hot issues.

The six topics included:

1. Tourism in Byron Shire: the Facts, Figures and Trends
2. Economy & Infrastructure: Benefits and Impacts
3. Culture: Maintaining the Vibe
4. Our Unique Environment: Protecting and Respecting
5. Events: Local, Emerging, Celebrations and Global Festivals
6. Short-Term Rental Accommodation (Holiday Letting)

Members of the community could provide their feedback in one of three ways:

1. Host their own Kitchen Table Discussion.
2. Attend one of the 11 workshops that were scheduled in each major town and village, or
3. Go online and complete the feedback form.

The community were very engaged with the process and Council received over 1200 completed surveys during the six week engagement period. This included those completed online, posted and emailed to Council and completed during the course of the workshops. Below are the demographic findings of who completed the feedback. The overall results will be included in the following sections.

Figure 5: The gender breakup included:

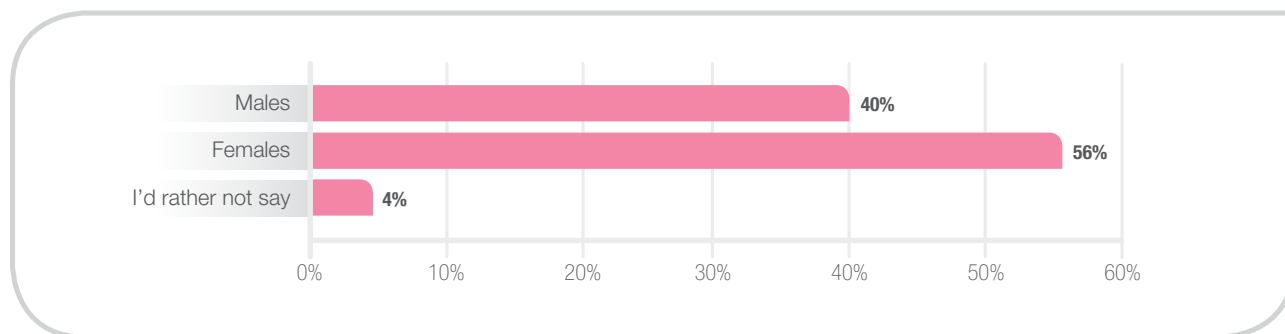
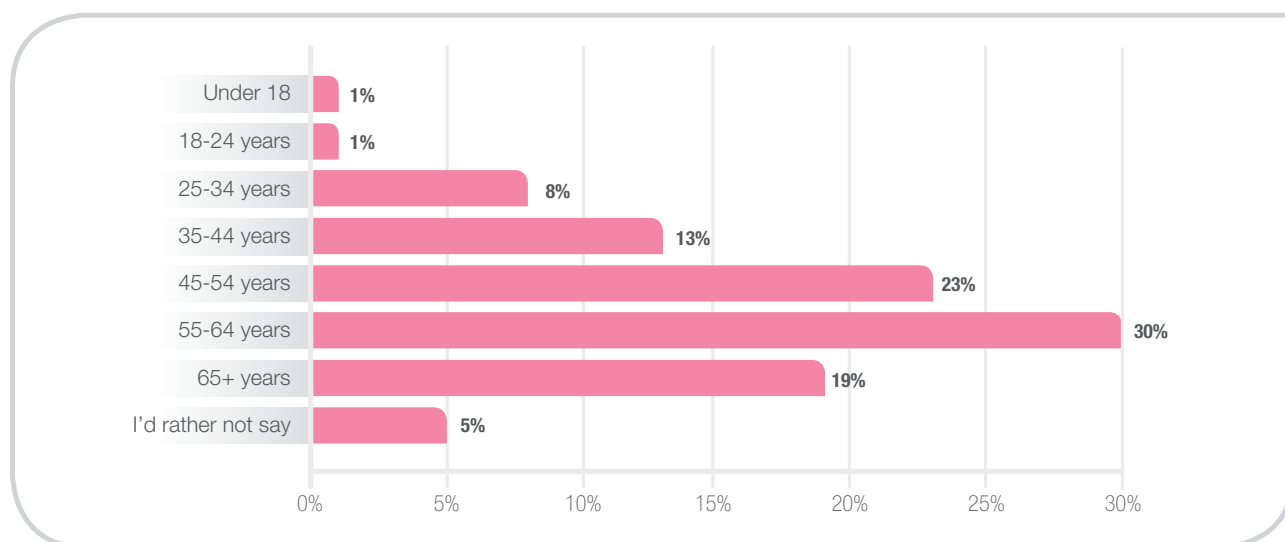


Figure 6: Age breakup of those who responded include:



Interestingly 84% of respondents said that they lived in Byron Shire with 6% identifying as a visitor, while 44% of those who responded said that they worked in Byron Shire. This figure explained the 34% of respondents who both live and work in the Byron Shire.

The volume of responses clearly showed that the Kitchen Table Book hit a chord with many people who were unable to make the normal engagement workshops or drop in sessions. People clearly followed the instructions and were able to provide informed comments. This excellent quality of answer will provide better information to build the Sustainable Visitation Strategy and inform the Community Solutions Panel.



Section 5

Sustainable Visitation: Values

5a. Background

Byron Shire has a dynamic culture that is unique to the region and Australia; one that attracts new residents and visitors each year. Byron Bay and its hinterland are internationally renowned for community, creativity and a place where people ‘feel the vibe’. The vibe is often described as the intangible values that establish the uniqueness.

Culture in the Byron Shire is the expression of the history, heritage, customs, arts, recreation, sport, creativity and values of a community. The community is diverse and colourful, which is why people love to visit. Each town, rural village and their localities have their own distinctiveness and mix of cultural values; embracing both traditional and alternative lifestyles and philosophies. There is strong respect for Aboriginal heritage and custodianship, and the value in understanding our link to country.

One of our challenges is how to preserve our culture and values while encouraging our visitors to engage and interact with us. Byron Bay, in particular, is well-known for its nightlife and entertainment. This leads to issues relating to noise, anti-social behaviour and crime while also being a fun and attractive place to “party”.

Byron Shire is also becoming the Northern Rivers hub for clean, green produce and food. This supports small farms, spray-free and organic horticulture alongside macadamia and dairy farms.



Below are the opinions of stakeholders who engage with our visitors on a regular basis.

Sharon Sloane Bundjalung of Byron Bay Aboriginal Corporation (Arakwal)	Dylan Orchard, NSW State Emergency Service - Zone North	Detective Inspector Matt Kehoe, Byron Bay Police Station, Tweed Byron Police District
<i>BOBBAC (Arakwal) feels that tourism is an important part of the economy here locally and that tourism benefits the community by ways of income creation and generation of jobs, although Byron is not affordable for most to live in. The negative to tourism is the town's divided social classes and that tourism is more than likely the major cause as well as deterioration of the environment for our area in which we live.</i>	<i>Tourism in our shire is on the rise and if it is left to rapidly grow the tourism industry could become like the Gold Coast, except without providing the necessary infrastructure for Council and local Emergency Services.</i>	<i>Presently I see tourism going in a direction that encourages home owners to rent out their homes or rooms for significant sums of money whilst failing to consider their neighbours and the broader community. I don't see such a trend as sustainable as there will be increasing anti social issues within the Byron township and disharmony within the communities these tourists stay in. This leads to a negative view of tourism which is harmful to a future positive direction for tourism within our shire.</i>

The values that were identified in the 2010 Byron Shire Tourism Management Plan include many of the cultural elements and values the Kitchen Table Discussions uncovered. Below is a list of the 2010 values and principles:

- Respect for residential amenity and community values
- Celebration of culture and social diversity
- Conservation of the rich natural environment
- Diversity
- Balance economic, social and environmental impacts
- Local history, spiritual and indigenous culture
- Harmony, safety and acceptance
- Active and healthy lifestyles
- Education and enlightenment
- Relaxed and engaged community
- Innovative and sustainable
- Support of business activity including tourism
- Attract visitors with shared values
- Diverse array of visitor experiences.

Many of the visitors in the next section identified many of these values and activities as the reason for their travel to Byron Shire.

5b. What we learnt from Visitor Focus Groups

Results of the visitor focus groups confirmed that sustainable tourism aligns well with the values of what Byron Shire stands for; it's a good fit and an opportunity for Byron Shire to be a leader in this area. It's the reason visitors travel to Byron Shire; for the relaxed culture, laid back creative atmosphere and the natural health and wellness 'vibe'. Visitors come to the region to de-stress and enjoy the relaxed feeling of the area. Here they have the ability to enjoy a variety of cafes, restaurants, experiences, markets, yoga, surfing, hinterland, attractions, interesting shops, local produce and the creative arts scene and live music, with friends and family. Natural activities and attractions are favoured over man made, with visitors confirming the importance that experiences align with the values of the region. Visitors enjoy the unique aspects of the different towns and villages and exploring surrounding towns.

Words used to describe the culture and values of Byron Shire include chilled, good vibes, hippy/alternative, stunning beaches, relaxed, Australian, health and wellness, different way of life, friendly, healthy active lifestyle, modern, free spirit, welcoming, clean green produce, homely, where life meets nature, idyllic, peaceful, beautiful, untouched, spectacular, creative, nature first, calm, laid back, natural beauty, passionate about preserving nature, peaceful and breathtaking.

With the exception of 'schoolies' and party-goers who visit the area for the nightlife and may not be respectful to the community or the environment, visitors demonstrated that most visitors are attracted to Byron Shire due to shared values and consider themselves to be a responsible visitor, supporting any initiatives around responsible sustainable tourism to encourage others. Visitors suggest strategies to limit the attraction of 'party-goers' to the area with fewer nightclubs or curfews on licensed venues and express a concern that the growth in Byron Shire will become too commercialised and developed which would impact the relaxed 'small town' feeling of the area.

For some it was felt that Byron Shire is already losing its special charm with overcrowding – not as 'chilled' nor a relaxing atmosphere as it was previously and is now full of tourists. Opinions varied on locals, from being friendly and helpful to locals getting territorial towards visitors.

5c. What we learnt from Staff

Council staff have indicated our 'sense of community' is damaged when visitors behave in a way that is not aligned to the community's values. For example, during peak tourism season there are a lot of noise complaints from holiday letting properties, an increase in vandalism to buildings and community infrastructure (such as park chairs, tables, gardens and bollards) and lots of noise from intoxicated revellers leaving late night establishments.

This type of behaviour is not aligned with the community's values and triggers many phone calls to Council from residents and also leads to budget impacts by having to repair damage to community infrastructure. Over time this has created a disconnect between the visitor and the resident population.

Council is working on a long term strategy to ensure towns and villages are accessible. Councils and local businesses are endeavouring to ensure that businesses, open spaces, services and attractions are accessible to all people, regardless of their physical limitations, disabilities or age. The following trends are relevant regarding accessible tourism in Byron Shire:

- Australia's population is ageing and there is a growing market for travellers with accessibility needs.
- Almost one in five people has a disability of which nearly 90 percent take a holiday each year.
- People with a disability account for some 8.2 million overnight trips and spend \$8 billion or 11 percent of Australia's overall tourism expenditure (Victorian Employer's Chamber of Commerce).

5d. What we learnt from Kitchen Table Discussions

The information gleaned from **Topic Three: Culture – Maintaining the Vibe** in the kitchen table book provided insights into how the community views the Shire and visitor behaviour. The questions around this topic were:

- What do you consider to be the key values that make people want to visit Byron Shire?
- Do you have examples where visitors reflect or not, those values in their behaviour?

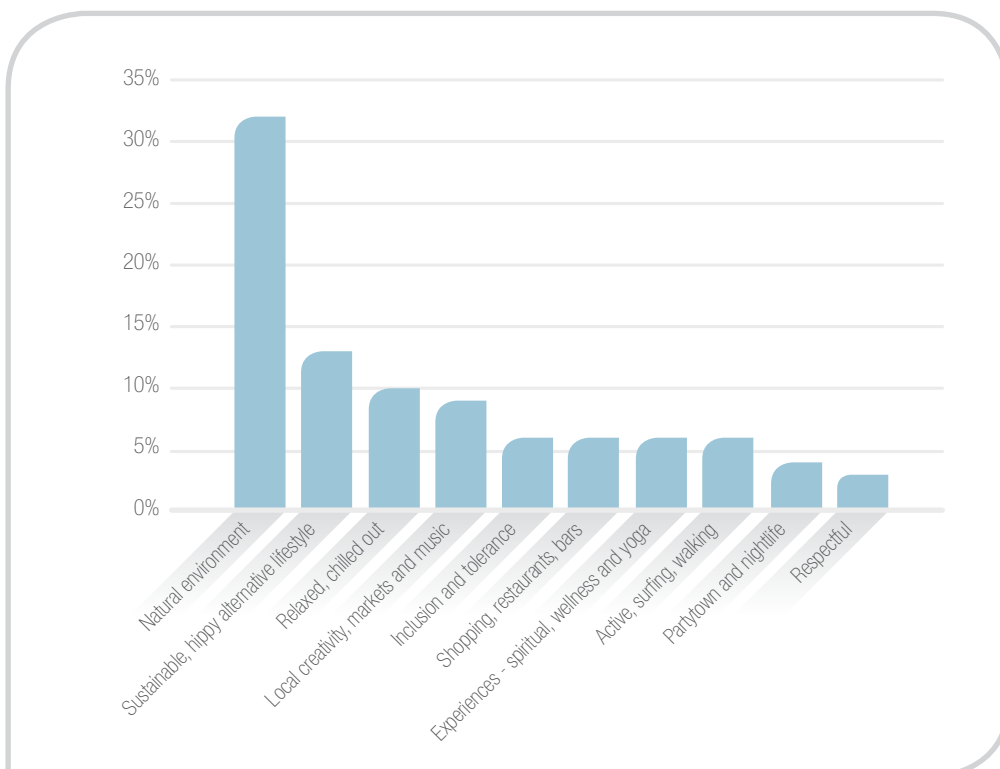
Top Ten Community Values

The members of our community who responded to the first question clearly identified ten strong values that they felt reflected Byron Shire. These included:

1. Appreciation of an active lifestyle; surfing, walking and biking.
2. Laid back and chilled values driven lifestyle.
3. Values that align with local creativity, markets and music.
4. Appreciation of sustainability, the natural environment and biodiversity.
5. Appreciation of unique shopping experiences, restaurants, local food and entertainment.
6. Values that align with the hippy and alternative lifestyle.
7. Values that align with wellness, spirituality and meditation.
8. Vibrant nightlife where people can have fun.
9. Respect for community, nature, others and self.
10. Tolerance for all.

These are highlighted in the following table in order of importance.

Figure 7: Top Ten Community Values that Typify Byron Shire



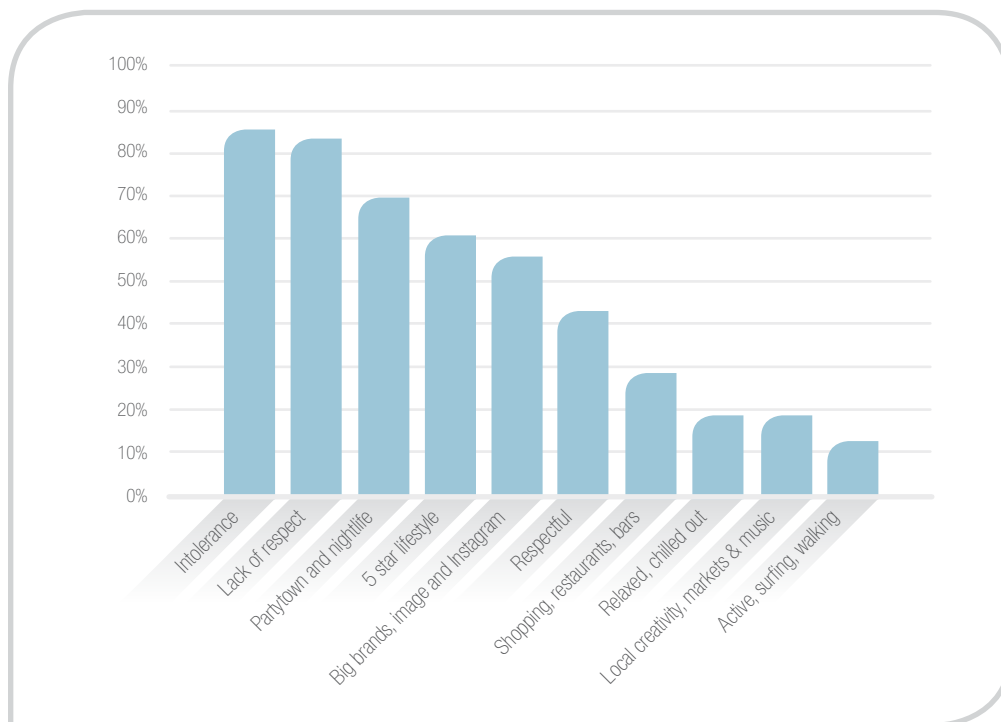
Top Ten Observed Visitor Behaviours

Our community was asked to identify behaviours that they see in visitors that either do or do not reflect the values of Byron Shire. The list of responses included behaviour that reflected some of the values our community identified but also others that are at odds with how the community views itself.

The Top Ten Behaviours Identified in Visitors by the Community

1. Intolerant and self-interested behaviour
2. Lack of respect for community, environment and self
3. Party behaviour, drinking and drugs
4. 5 star lifestyle, customised holidays where money is no option
5. Big Brands, image and Instagram
6. Respectful of local community, environment and self
7. Enjoyment of unique shopping experiences, restaurants, local food and entertainment
8. Enjoys the laid back and chilled values driven lifestyle
9. Visit to engage with the local creativity, markets and music
10. Appreciation of an active lifestyle; surfing, walking and biking

Figure 8: Top Ten Visitor Behaviours as Identified by the Community



The chart clearly shows the community identifying visitor behaviours perceived as intolerance and lacking respect. The examples ranged from aggressive abusive behaviour to littering to illegal camping or purchasing from chain stores. It is also closely connected with number three – party-town, getting drunk and anti-social behaviour. Also it is clear that similar behaviours link 4 and 5 – 5 star lifestyle, where expense is no issue to the attraction with shopping, image and Instagram.

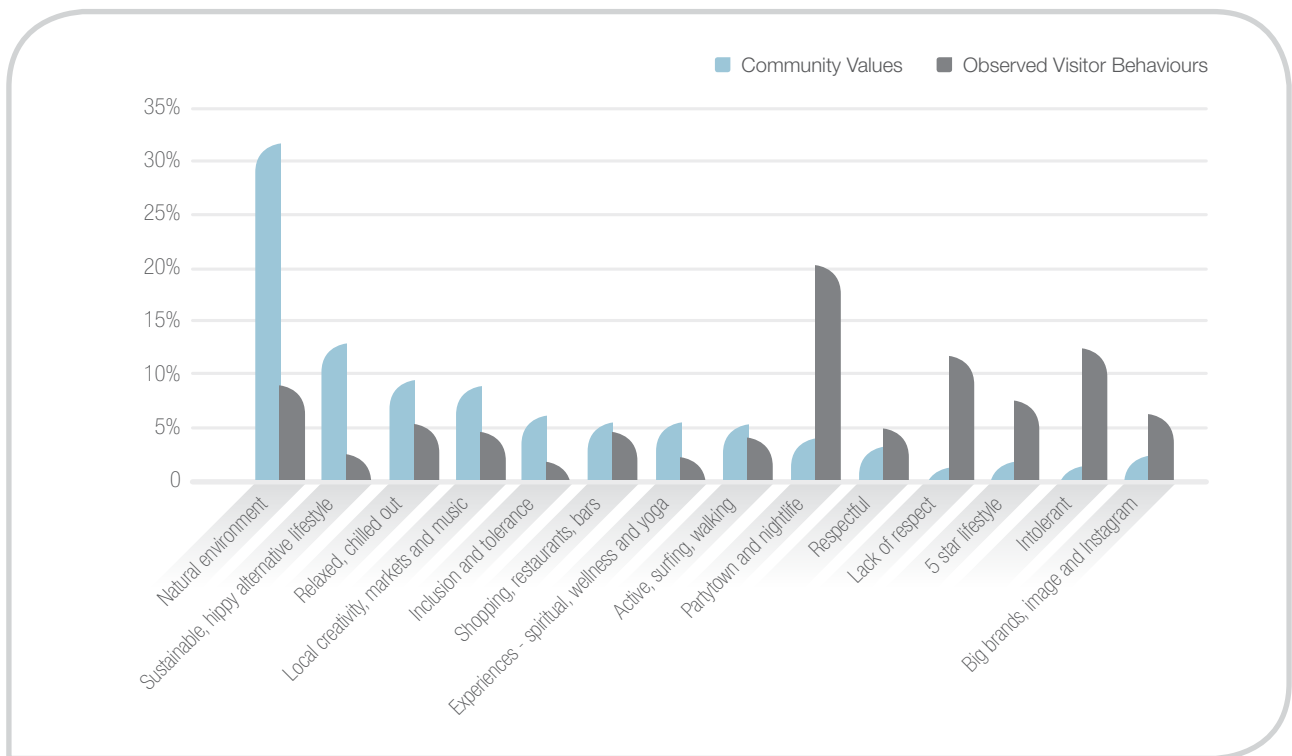
However our community clearly identified a number of behaviours that did align with the community values; including being respectful and engaging, relaxed and chilled, attracted to local markets, the creative environment and surfing and being active.

The results clearly show that our community is concerned about much of the behaviour that is displayed by our visitors, however they do acknowledge that perhaps the ‘positive behaviours’ are being displayed, however the negative behaviours have a greater impact on the community.

Comparing Community Values and Observed Visitor Behaviours

The graph below shows the gap between community values and observed visitor behaviour. By overlaying the results we see some visitor behaviours are in conflict with the community values while some are aligned.

Figure 9: Community Values and observed Visitor Behaviours Overlaid



In terms of overall percentages, the table below highlights the ranking:

- Blue shading are responses with the closest aligned percentage of community values matched to observed visitor behaviours

Table 7: Community values compared with observed visitor behaviours.

	Community Values (%)	Observed Visitor Behaviours (%)
Appreciates natural environment and wildlife	32%	9%
Sustainable, alternate & hippy lifestyle	13%	2%
Enjoys relaxed, chilled out lifestyle	10%	6%
Appreciates local creativity, markets & music	9%	5%
Values of inclusion and tolerance	6%	1%
Enjoys unique shopping experiences, great restaurants & bars and local food	6%	5%
Enjoys active, surfing and walking lifestyle	6%	4%
Experiences - spiritual, wellness and yoga	6%	2%
Comes for the party-town and nightlife and revolves around drinking	4%	21%
Respectful to all shown in way people interact	3%	6%
Demonstrating lack of respect for all and environment	1%	11%
5 star lifestyle where money is no object	2%	8%
Intolerant behaviour towards community	1%	12%
Big brands, image & Instagram	1%	7%

Some things to note however about the comments that the respondents made:

- Some were reflecting the values that made them move to the Byron Shire many years go – for example - *“These values have changed over time. Initially, people came here for the alternative lifestyle, culture and experience. Then people came here to make money, and exploit the popularity and reputation of Byron. The party town experience has changed from an alternative, ‘hippy’ scene, to nightclubs attracting an excessive drinking, ‘yobo’ crowd. The surfers comment about the aggression in the surf - not the spirit they’re after. The locals who made up the character of Byron that people came here to enjoy are leaving because they don’t want to live in the town it has become.”*
- Another who moved in the 1990s - *“Byron’s natural environment being uniquely biologically diverse and beautiful attracts many more visitors (and an increasing population which is questionably sustainable), there is small issues like campers leaving there poos and toilet paper in the parks to be stood on or spread disease, once easily accessible swimming holes, walking tracks, and town venues being overcrowded or closed down, to community being less tolerant and therefore less friendly to no fault of theirs. Those that moved in recently don’t know the difference - I’ve been here since 1991. Community ease is lost.”*
- People were also more likely to mention behaviour that is perceived as negative. One respondent felt that they only *“remember the negative behaviour and don’t acknowledge the rest of the tourists who are enjoying our town in a positive way.”* So when thinking about the behaviours, it is important to understand that people were likely to respond more often with negative comments.

- There were also comments reflecting generational discrepancies – for example many respondents wanted more visitors to reflect their own age groups. An example that reflected this includes, “*we need to cater more to older people as the entertainment is dreadful for locals (the noise carries all over the ‘inner city’ and the bass is now felt in the heart - not joking)*”
- Many respondents’ comments covered many values and behaviours – rarely did a respondent identify one behaviour and value only.
- Having respect was implied in many of the replies – however where it was not directly referred to, this was not categorised under respect. Please note however, ‘respect’ was a strong value which underpinned many of the others such as respect for alternate and sustainable lifestyle and respect for natural environment.

Community Values That Align With Observed Visitor Behaviour

The two lines in table 7 that are almost identical (only 1-2 percent difference), highlight where the community values and observed visitor behaviours are clearly aligned. The rows where the values and behaviours aligned were:

- Enjoys the unique shopping experiences (especially Byron Shire brands), great food at restaurants and cafes, sampling the local produce and enjoying the range of cocktails in the many bars (community values at 6% and observed visitor behaviour at 5%).
- Enjoys the active lifestyle including surfing, running, bush walking and biking (community values at 6% and observed visitor behaviour at 4%).



1. Enjoys Unique Shopping Experiences, Great Restaurants & Bars and Local Food

Just over 5% of the respondents felt that the visitors are attracted to Byron Shire for the unique shopping experiences (especially Byron Shire brands), enjoying the great food at restaurants and cafes, sampling the local produce and enjoying the range of cocktails in the many bars. Respondents claimed that they see many visitors enjoying these activities – so much so that it may be hard to get seats at your favourite restaurants and cafes. They were not referring to the ‘party-town’ activity but more the hustle and bustle of restaurants and retail. Examples:

“A great place to live and or visit as a tourist. Terrific restaurants and cafes, and takeaway shops, plus a booming retail precinct. The surrounding townships are also very pretty and have a friendly atmosphere. Places like Brunswick Heads are also great places to visit and provide great services for tourists and beautiful waterways and beaches.”

“Not only do we live in paradise but the talent in this area is outstanding. People come for a night at the picture house then follow on to dinner at some of our outstanding restaurant then after flow on down to the pub for a dance. It creates some fantastic fun energy in our town. I love it.”

“City vibe mixed with lots of diversity of people. Access to alternate cultural experiences. Reputation as a place whose “it’s a cool place to meet up with friends” - festivals, markets, etc -beach for day and clubs at night. People seeking a spiritual experience / or wanting some peace and rest (these are people I see the most).

While some in our community acknowledged this as a good thing, many others lamented the change from the sleepy country villages that is changing their retail mix to meet the needs of the visitors.

“So I see very little engagement with the region as a whole, and therefore very little engagement with the values that this region stands for. Instead, in general, I see people coming to drink, party, get a tan, consume, shop, drink lattes and cocktails and look beautiful while taking selfies for their insta pages.”

“Tourism in Byron has changed the entire town. The shops are not targeted at servicing the locals. They are high end, and not practical to building community affordability.”

2. Enjoys Active, Surfing and Walking Lifestyle

The alignment of the active lifestyle was also anticipated – with many people attracted to the surfing beaches, walking the lighthouse and visiting Minyon Falls. The only issue the respondents had with the visitors coming to the region for this type of activity was the overcrowding issues: Examples:

“Fitness - Locals and tourists alike - doing lighthouse walk, swimming, surfing, walking on the beach.”

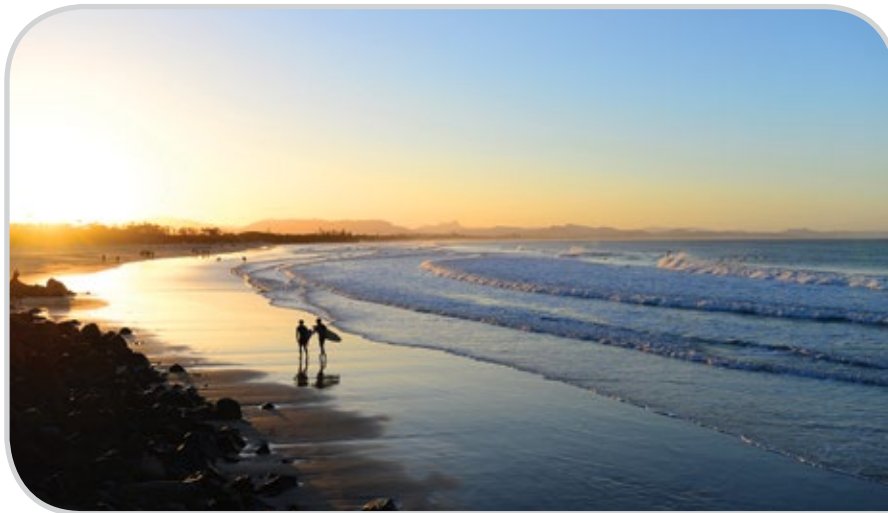
“It used to be alternative layback culture and good surf but so many locals can’t afford to live here anymore and the surf is overcrowded”.

“Beaches and surf. Locals have problems accessing good surfing condition due to overload of tourists.”

“In few keys, what’s good – surf culture, coffee savoir-faire, pictures, wildness and healthy life in Byron (yoga, food, surf, beach)”

So it is not surprising that these are the most ‘commonly aligned’ values to behaviours that the respondents identified.

Those community values in table 7 highlight the community’s observations of visitors behaviours. The following section covers the comments made by the respondents for each identified value.



3. Natural Environment, Beauty and Wildlife

This was the overwhelming value identified by the community as typifying what they think the visitors want to experience when they come to Byron Shire. Spectacular views, beaches and the hills were some of the natural attractions identified. However many respondents felt that increasing the number and types of natural attractions is one way of aligning values to the visitors we are trying to attract. Comments included:

- “In my personal experience, the values that attracted me were related to community, nature, and a slow-paced lifestyle. However, arriving in Australia I realised a lot of tourists were attracted by the foods and bars.”
- “People think that they want the natural environment, but businesses have just monetised that into a shopfront on the beach selling endless rubbish and resort ware.”
- “It is beautiful coastal location with things to do away from the grind and total commercialisation of other locations. People like the simple approach and natural beauty.”
- “It’s the lay back vibe of Byron that entices visitors to the Bay. While that sometimes attracts anti social behaviour often on a Friday or Saturday night the energy from the ley line running from Tea Tree Lake at Broken Head via the Lighthouse, Julian Rocks and finishing at Mt Warning attracts many people to feel and experience a very special energy when they visit Byron. Shopping guides are available for the Byron CBD, the Arts and Industry Park or the hinterland including Bangalow, Newrybar and Federal. Entertainment: Cinema guides are available weekly, music festival transportation is promoted and activities at the Community Centre are regularly displayed. Details of all the weekly Farmers Markets and monthly regional markets are provided.”

4. Enjoys Relaxed, Chilled-Out Lifestyle

This lifestyle is typified by the welcome sign on Ewingsdale Road. This refers for example to people stopping and talking to one another and taking the time to talk. Respondents felt that this was changing and their opinions are listed in this section.

Respondents used the following words to capture the values essence:

- “Chilled out groups of people talking and laughing in the park.”
- “People standing around listening to music and buskers”.
- “Young people having fun in the outdoors”.
- “Beachfront drumming”.

Our community liked that visitors adapted to the ‘chilled out’ vibe. Examples of the behaviours that reflect this vibe were identified below by respondents:

- “Byron Shire has long been a place known for its natural beauty, creativity and chilled lifestyle. Different villages represent different values as far as I can see. Bangalow is a sedate, well educated and generally affluent village, where Mullumbimby is (or was) more of a hippy vibe, now becoming more hipster, but environmentally and politically active with a strong interest in natural medicine and healthy living. Byron Bay is primarily known for its beach culture with beach lifestyle values of chilling, surfing and yoga. Brunswick Heads is an old fashioned seaside village destination where families enjoy their traditional week long camping sojourns in summer. The tourists that go to Bruns still reflect a slower more iconic Aussie beach holiday.”
- “50 Km/Hr speed limit helps people chill out. Some people take longer to adjust. That’s why there should never be any 4-lane roads. The Low Rise building plan. That is what makes Byron Chill-Out-Able. People walk across roads often with their backs turned to traffic. In the area east of the Suffolk Park shops, I love people walking on the road completely oblivious to cars. Love that there are no gutters in the streets without. Build footpaths before gutters. Byron town must also cherish and preserve its shabbiness.”

5. Sustainable, Alternate & Hippy Lifestyle

These values align with appreciating natural beauty, the beaches and sustainable lifestyles. Respondents identified that the hippy culture is still evident across the Shire but not nearly as strong or as dominant as it was in the seventies. Respondents also wanted ways of connecting with visitors in terms of sustainability and alternate lifestyles.

One community respondent commented:

- “In my personal experience, the values that attracted me were related to community, nature, and a slow-paced lifestyle. However, arriving in Australia I realised a lot of tourists were attracted by the foods and bars.”

Some examples of comments around these values and behaviours include:

- “The local community is the culture. The rich people and the tourists are attracted to Byron because of the laid back, healthy, alternative hippy lifestyle - the local culture. Rich people and tourists, for the most part, generally are not really laid back, alternative or hippies. Byron Shire is just becoming a distant suburb of trendy Sydney or Melbourne, or Australia’s version of Kuta, Bali. I personally, wholeheartedly agree that nudity on the beach or in my own home is totally acceptable, however, I would really prefer not to walk around my local supermarket or down my local street having to constantly avoid looking at tourists bare butts! (Because even a middle age hippy woman finds it impossible to not look!)”
- “The one that I see is in the backpackers and this is the ‘alternative’ culture perceived to exist here. And I am proud of that perception and of our culture differences. But the issue is the overload of so many people and how that changes this valuable cultural trait.”
- “I think the key values and attractions have been the relaxed hippy vibe, but this is fast changing with the growth and development of shopping plaza’s and main stream chain stores. I can see Byron visitors will quickly be spilling over to enjoy the relaxed vibe of Brunswick heads and the hippy vibe of Mullumbimby more and more, as Byron becomes another Noosa. If we can work to retaining our community values of arts, creativity, music, organic food and aboriginal heritage, it will be a win for all.”
- “The key values are protection of the natural environment eg Nature Reserves, Marine Reserves, waterways & National Parks as well as Council parks & gardens that are accessible to all people. A reputation for alternative lifestyles that pioneered sustainability, renewable energy & living with a small footprint on the earth. Alternative lifestyles also encouraged a high degree of creativity in the arts & in living styles. There was a high level of tolerance of different ways of living and beliefs. Also a strong importance placed on community connection & support. With the majority of these things, tourists can’t get involved as the average stay is 2-3 days here. I have experienced a couple of young people who got involved in environmental groups and contributed a lot to the community.”

“The value of Byron in regards to tourism stems entirely from its natural beauty and resources. Even the restaurants are a direct reflection of this as their excellent food is a result of fantastic local produce. It is the beaches and hinterland that set apart this area and the culture is a reflection of the people that love and value these things. Living in the hinterland I have not had many negative interactions with tourists and as long as they respect the environment then everyone is welcome.”

“Nature, nature and nature.”

“1. Attraction of undeveloped natural coast and hinterland. 2. Commitment of community and council to preserve these. Tourism brings human impacts that are destroying these key values. Increased human, domestic pets and road traffic are destroying natural habitat for fauna. Increased number of dogs invading rural and urban wildlife habitat. Example the migratory bird breeding grounds along the beach from Brunswick Heads to Broken Head are being destroyed by human and dog incursions. Dog permitted beaches are close to breeding grounds. Humans and dogs are not showing care or respect for internationally significant migratory bird breeding grounds. Prior to 2014 swamp wallaby sightings in the coastal reserve adjacent to Tyagarah carpark were frequent and numerous. Since 2014 sightings have declined to nil.”



6. Appreciates Local Creativity, Markets & Music

Respondents felt that Byron Shire values align with creativity whether that is in arts and crafts, music, film or theatre. Byron Shire also attracts many creatives (music, film and arts) and celebrities to live here, cementing Byron Shire as the place to balance work and lifestyle. Additionally people love the vibe from the buskers all across the Shire, smaller live music gigs and artisan displays.

Some examples of the community responses on these values were as follows:

“How do we maintain this culture? Seems like it’s going down the drain. Our markets are a key player in their culture and it’s got a horrible market ground. Pure gravel, disgusting. Is this how we provide an expression of culture and provide livelihoods to the community?”

If we can work to retaining our community values of arts, creativity, music, organic food and aboriginal heritage, it will be a win for all:

“The laid back lifestyle, creative, dynamic along with the many markets and events.”

“Beach culture, the farmers markets and the artisan markets, tourists are generally paying for the products from those makers especially.”

“What initially attracted people was the low-key uncrowded beaches and venues. Surfing, music, and acceptance of alternative cultures.”

“The cultural environment e.g. music and art and the community spirit. Some tourists get it and we have a lot of live music in Byron Bay because there are tourists to support it but more often than not they don’t get it.”

7. Experiences - Spiritual, Wellness and Yoga

Our community also acknowledged that many tourists come to our Shire for wellness, yoga, spiritual and meditation holidays and workshop. Many visitors talk about the ‘spiritual feeling’ they get when arriving within the Shire. On top of that many practitioners around alternate therapies and practices are leading wellness tourism in the Shire. Additionally many organisations are including alternative activities in their business conferences that are held in the Shire. Examples of comments included the following:

- “People come to Byron for the yoga, meditation, partying, playfulness in the environment, business and enterprise development and this all reflects a common value/interest in self-discovery.”
- “Some do come for the positive, yoga, well-being, spiritual vibe, some for the music scene and some for the whale watching; but others come for the ‘party’ scene.”
- “Some key values are a healthy lifestyle, yoga, alternative therapies, organic farming, etc. Examples where tourists reflect these values are guests that fly in to attend health retreats, yoga workshops, permaculture courses, and receive medical treatment at places like the health lodge.”
- “I think people come for the beautiful beaches and the natural healing of the area. This is why there are so many yoga schools, retreat centres etc. I am unhappy that the quality is dropping and that we are headed in the way of the Gold Coast with the bars, drunks and kids and crime. We never had to worry about these things before, now we do.”
- “Many tourists come to Byron to ‘find themselves’ without considering the impact. Most weekends, groups of travellers walk past my house on their way to party at Tallows, with no respect for locals trying to sleep or wildlife/dunes that would be impacted by their actions. So no, I don’t think a lot of tourists reflect our values in practice.”
- “There are many health resorts and yoga retreat style holidays, it would appear that many holiday visitors seek natural therapies and healthy lifestyle holiday options.”

8. Comes For the Party-town Reputation and Nightlife

Our residents found this visitor driven behaviour the most obvious of all visitor behaviour and the most ‘disliked’. They were able to describe this associated behaviour more than any others as they felt it was the most conflicting with community culture and values. Behaviours they recognised as being negative included excessive drinking, aggressive behaviour, fights, parties, drug taking and yelling late at night.

Below are some examples of the comments from the Kitchen Table Discussions:

- “Most visitors who come for partying appreciate what we have and in the main respect it BUT the partygoers are the main disruption to our “community”. I have an Airbnb whole home as a neighbour - the people to rent it, especially those who come for party events are mostly noisy, disrespectful, often intoxicated at night.”
- “I see many tourists who have vastly different cultural values to those that we aim to preserve. Some come to party and drink, walking down the streets with beers in hand. Some come to buy upmarket exorbitant designer label clothes because it is Byron Bay, there are more Middle Eastern faces and Asian tourists arriving who have no sense of these values and are drawn by it’s natural beauty, while not contributing to any sustainable attitudes. I see loud mouthed Gold Coast males in groups, yahooping and drunk. There are the new nouveaux riche who come to buy up properties and holiday let for the greatest profit, rather than any thought of making affordable those places for young families. Many of the young European back packers are the ones who “get it” and blend in with the values as they are aware of sustainable living. They come to find work and are grateful to find a haven that fits with their values.”
- “I would like to believe most visitors reflect these values in a positive way, however I am aware of the drug and alcohol related crime which is extremely high in the shire, including violent assaults and sexual assaults as well as traffic offences. I believe, given the Byron Shire reputation, that many overseas visitors are under the impression that some illicit drugs such as cannabis are legal within the shire, thus increasing drug detection and related offences.”

“Drugs and easy access to a lot of alcohol stop people from thinking about others. I have to say that the drug problem DOES NOT come from the international tourism.”

“We should be attracting more families and health and well being goers and instead of drug crazed beer drinking trash throwing rude people.”

9. 5 Star Lifestyle Where Money Is No Object

Respondents identified the change in demographic of some people holidaying in the Shire. Instead of enjoying the hostels or traditional apartment or motel accommodation, many visitors are engaging in the five-star experience. With many resorts and executive homes now available, coupled with expensive restaurants and private activities, Byron Shire is now attracting higher number of higher nett worth visitors. Some respondents who are involved in the ‘alternate’ culture lacked an affinity with this visitor and indicated they sometimes feel like exhibits in a zoo. Examples relevant to the breadth of comment on this issue are listed below:

“Some times shopping in Mullumbimby can be hard because our beautiful, unique little town can feel like a place that more conservative tourists see as a freak show. Seeing them point at locals & take photos can be very distressing.”

“You adopted to move the status of all the Shires Parks from public recreational parks to the capacity of developer driven permanent commercial activity and associated construction of buildings. And AndAnd. You are not idiots, we know that this Council is anti community. But you are stupid as the community that attempts to still have a place here on our streets, in our parks and in using our towns for community events and rally is being shut out by Council, as Council obviously only wants rich people here.”

“The rich people and the tourists are attracted to Byron because of the laid back, healthy, alternative hippy life-style - the local culture. Rich people and tourists, for the most part, generally are not really laid back, alternative or hippies. Byron Shire is just becoming a distant suburb of trendy Sydney or Melbourne, or Australia’s version of Kuta, Bali.”

“High end tourists looking for a short connection with the spirit of Byron has helped drive commercialisation of a way of life tourism operators benefit from. Byron will soon lose its culture and become a high end resort destination no different to Noosa, losing its unique point of difference. I think it’s too late to change it but would be on board to positively help find a solution to protect it.”

10. Big Brands, Image & Instagram

Respondents indicated that many visitors coming to Byron Shire were most likely to take selfies at the lighthouse, shop at national brand stores and blog about their coffee or brunch. Our community feels that we need to support creativity over generic brand shopping and image based tourism. Examples of responses include:

“So I see very little engagement with the region as a whole, and therefore very little engagement with the values that this region stands for. Instead, in general, I see people coming to drink, party, get a tan, consume, shop, drink lattes and cocktails and look beautiful while taking selfies for their insta pages.”

“For sure the alternative ‘hippy’ green and clean values are what people like to imagine as byron. I wish these were genuine values amongst our visitors however I believe now the ‘byron’ brand name is the real reason the masses come, they know it’s cool to be seen here and I think their new (unspoken) value is pure CONSUMPTION. Some visitors embrace the environment by being responsible with their rubbish and listening to the local tune but most come, look, use, eat, drink and dump.”

11. and 12. – Respect to all and Demonstrated Lack of Respect

These two contrasting values and demonstrated behaviours will be dealt with in one section.

Our community felt that our Shire is built on respect – for the environment, others and self. These values are said to be strong and deep, however they also acknowledged that some of our community show little respect to one another and to visitors. Respondents cited examples of residents being abusive to visitors. Examples of comments:

- “Visitors are attracted to Byron because of its vibe and natural beauty, but many show a lack of respect for the environment and fragile ecology. NSW planning law is pro development that drives short term personal gain. Significant community engagement is needed to maintain the unique village character so attractive to visitors - a long term game where the economic benefit is shared.”
- “Key values: sustainability, respect for diversity (cultural and social); environmental respect. Apparently a huge percentage of visitors do not leave the town of Byron Bay (no public transport) so I see very little engagement with the region as a whole, and therefore very little engagement with the values that this region stands for.”
- “The north end of the Shire is regularly “invaded” by Queenslanders, usually younger people, here to party. Due to holiday lettings in residential areas we regularly have noise issues, fires on the beach fuelled by dune vegetation and speeding on the local roads – no respect. In Byron, we’ve had the experience of being pushed off the footpath as visitors were 3 & 4 abreast or dancing to the buskers with no thought for anyone else. We no longer go to the Byron restaurants as they are usually noisy, crowded and at times, don’t feel safe.”
- “The uniqueness and beauty is priceless, the attitude of some locals towards visitors can be hostile and unwelcoming.”
- “The vibe has definitely changed. The people visiting and living here now are definitely not as chilled and relaxed as they once were. The energy is still here but i feel there is way more frustration now than there ever has been. People want to be here because of the liberal and relaxed vibe of byron and of course all of this surrounded by amazing beaches and warm weather and water. It brings together so many elements that people look for in a holiday, day trip or weekend including great food, beautiful scenery, relaxed atmosphere, beaches. It has everything!!! All popular tourist destinations have an underbelly of undesirable behaviour and lack of respect - that is to be expected.”
- “Many tourists come to Byron to ‘find themselves’ without considering the impact. Most weekends, groups of travellers walk past my house on their way to party at tallows, with no respect for locals trying to sleep or wildlife/dunes that would be impacted by their actions. So no, I don’t think a lot of tourists reflect our values in practice.”

13. and 14. Values of Inclusion and Tolerance and the opposite Intolerant Behaviour

These two contrasting values and demonstrated behaviours will be dealt with in one section.

As expected, the overwhelming value preferred by the respondents was of tolerance; for everyone, diverse groups, homeless, refugees and in some instances, visitors. However, some community respondents also recognised that Byron Shire has changed and some in our community display intolerance. Intolerance was said to be demonstrated by the lack of interaction between community and visitors, negative behaviour around interactions and the community or others feeling like they are being judged; leading to a community that is feeling frustrated, stressed and disappointed.

- “I think the main values are natural beauty and the environment. Others are social inclusion and social enjoyment. I see plenty of folks arrive in groups (mainly young men) who do not seem to be in tune with this culture. They just want to get wasted. I have been accosted by groups of young men screaming obscenities. I sometimes see people urinating in the street. They don’t treat the town with respect - be use to them it’s their piss up let loose town, Noosa doesn’t seem to have this problem as it caters to a more sophisticated market. Perhaps Byron needs to move away from loutish youths and attract more eco sensitive tourists and more sophisticated travellers they will respect the culture and the environment.”

- “I have experienced a couple of young people who got involved in environment groups and contributed a lot to the community, as they were here for several weeks or months. Many tourists do the right thing when visiting the natural environment and respect it. Some of the negative things I’ve experienced from tourists: I have had loutish, drunken men turn on me in the street, at 5pm in the afternoon in Byron Bay because I asked them not to laugh at a homeless person. They displayed aggression towards me, and a lack of compassion & tolerance for the less fortunate members of society.”
- “Our motto ‘slow down relax’ etc is fantastic. Bless our Shire for this. We are a very tolerant Shire and peoples. I believe the international tourists appreciate the freedom we give them to relax and enjoy themselves and in turn they spread the word globally that Byron Bay in particular is the best place visit in Australia. We embrace life here and our tourists sense this, appreciate this and enjoy our hospitality and vibe. It’s a simpatico.”
- “The shire needs to develop more activities for visitors to participate in and have a low tolerance to antisocial behaviours on the streets in particular. The overreliance on alcohol and drug induced activity should be a concern for council and the authorities.”
- “A sense of relaxation & freedom, tolerance & respect towards others within the coastal & hinterland environments. Plus quirkiness & a willingness to stop & tell stories, have a yarn, go to the local store, pub, club & mix with the characters & colours of a diverse community. There is a need to attract visitors who appreciate & respect the community’s values, not by sheer numbers impose their behaviour & home values on locals. We need to protect the diversity, not see the lifestyle be that of the Gold coast & the cities. Picnics, leisurely walks, feeling secure, not judged for what is worn, cheeriness, chats on the corner - have seen much of these “events” over the decade not as obvious with the surge of up-market restaurants, trendy cafes & boutiques, takeover of camping grounds, and rising everyday housing costs etc.”
- “The values of care and tolerance which came with the alternative life-stylers are not always expressed by those visiting. Tourists tend to want to consume rather than listen observe and share.”
- “I have lived and visited my grandparents here since the early 70’s and have always loved the beaches and the beach culture of friendliness, the laid back easy going locals, the inclusiveness of people from all walks of life!”
- “Cultural values can still be “seen” but local groups should welcome tourists and “invite” them to be inclusive eg bird groups, snorkelling / Byron Underwater Research Group. Volunteers being included in community groups. Some tourists don’t respect values. This is worldwide. They are on ‘holidays’ and don’t care to recycle.”

One respondent provided a common insight which covers many values and observed behaviours - felt by many residents:

- “The key values that I see are the things that residents have fought for since the 1970s and that make Byron Shire different to the Gold Coast. These include low key development eg low rise buildings with a 3 storey height limit; refusal to allow fast food chains eg McDonalds & other franchises with poor quality food or goods. Protection of the natural environment eg Nature Reserves, Marine Reserves, waterways & National Parks as well as Council parks & gardens that are accessible to all people. A reputation for alternative lifestyles that pioneered sustainability, renewable energy & living with a small footprint on the earth. Alternative lifestyles also encouraged a high degree of creativity in the arts & in living styles. There was a high level of tolerance of different ways of living and beliefs. Also a strong importance placed on community connection & support. With the majority of these things, tourists can get involved as the average stay is 2-3 days here. The police told her that they cannot keep up with the level of violence in Byron Bay. I have also been pick pocketed in a shop in Byron. This has never happened to me anywhere else in Australia. I have seen many tourists lighting fires & partying in the National Parks illegally. I’ve also seen them camping in National Parks and Council reserves, trashing the bushland around them and using it as a toilet. These are tourists, as distinct from homeless people. Illegal camping is a huge problem that has not been addressed properly by Council, probably due to a lack of resources. I have spoken to these tourists and asked why they don’t stay at a hostel. They answer that they don’t want to spend the money on it. At Christmas time I have seen them sleeping in their cars in the Woolworths car park. They told me that they did this because all of the camp grounds were full.”



Section 6

Sustainable Visitation: Environment

6a. Background

Byron Shire is one of the most environmentally rich and diverse regions for fauna and flora in Australia. A combination of high rainfall and mild climatic conditions and variation in topography, geology and altitude support a range of ecosystems and landscape features: forests, grasslands, creeks and rivers, paper bark swamps, mangroves and wetlands, coastal dune systems, sandy and rocky cove beaches and headlands. These are all prime environments for tourists, surfers, bloggers, businesses and celebrities.

Council is developing the Net Zero Emissions Strategy for Byron Council Operations 2025 and within this framework opportunities for industry to engage and innovate are highlighted. By Council moving to a Sustainable Visitation Strategy, the tourism sector will have the opportunity to gain certification and promote the destination as sustainable for responsible tourists. Byron Shire will then be identified as a 'responsible tourism' destination which in essence:

- Minimises negative impacts on the economy, environment and society.
- Generates economic benefits for local people and enhances the well-being of host communities, improves working conditions and access to the industry.
- Involves local people in decisions that affect their lives and life changes.
- Makes positive contributions to the conservation of natural, social and cultural heritage.
- Provides more enjoyable experiences for visitors through more meaningful connections with local people, and a greater understanding of local cultural, social and environmental issues.
- Provides access for people with disabilities and the disadvantaged.
- Is culturally sensitive, engenders respect between visitors and hosts, and builds local pride and confidence.

For more information visit www.gstcouncil.org/for-travelers/.

Byron Shire Council has already taken a number of steps down the path to carbon neutrality and 100% renewable energy. To date, Council has installed over 215kw of solar on its assets and has plans to install a further 7.8MW. Other key projects include electric vehicle charging station and strategy, a bike plan, as well as support for Community Gardens and food grown on footpaths. Council also supports sustainability events such as Renew Fest, World Environment Day and Sustainable House Day.

We need to find a balance, to encourage visitors to engage with our natural environment without causing damage, and ideally to be able to sustain and improve our environment.

What is Council's resolved position?

Council resolved at the Ordinary meeting held March, 2017 the following: 17-086

- *To achieve 100% net zero emissions by 2025 in collaboration with Zero Emissions Byron (ZEB)*
- *Sourcing 100% of its energy through renewable sources within the next 10 years (2027).*

Council resolved at the Ordinary meeting held October, 2018 the following: 18-680

- *To declare that we are in a State of Climate Emergency that requires urgent action by all levels of government, including by local Councils.*
- *To develop a Shire-wide Community Climate Emergency Plan to further enhance resilience and reduce climate impacts in a timeframe that is as fast as practicably possible.*

6b. What we learnt from Visitor Focus Groups

From visitor engagement we learnt that visitors are attracted to natural experiences – walking, sightseeing, tracking, hiking and beaches and waterfalls to enjoy. They are seeking a mix of adventure, fun and relaxing activities; areas to explore, to de-stress from work and city and seeking a variety of things to do and see, including pools, markets and experiences.

Along with access to good food, restaurants and cafes, Byron Shire is of appeal for its natural beauty – the beaches, scenic walks, the lighthouse walk, hinterlands and Wategos Beach. Visitors describe the scenery as spectacular, idyllic, pretty, beautiful and scenic – the Shire is a relaxing escape from busy city life. The natural environment never disappoints our visitors - it is perceived as beautiful, natural, calm and peaceful.

Visitors see promoting responsible tourism as a perfect fit for Byron Shire as this feels like it's a formal version of what the region is already known for – its natural 'untouched' environment, relaxed atmosphere of passionate 'hippy', free-spirited nature lovers. All visitors interviewed support responsible tourism, and most felt they are already environmentally conscious and respectful.

They do not want to spoil the natural landscape with 'attractions' or man made experiences – there is more interest in the back to basics, simple and nature driven experiences that are relaxing.

Visitors identified the need to protect the community and uniqueness, the natural beauty and untouched environment. It's seen as important to make visitors aware of their responsibilities when visiting a place of natural beauty and educate visitors about sustainability. Here is an opportunity to have an increased focus on conservation and the environment with activities for visitors to do which immerse them in the conservation process and allow visitors to contribute to the sustainability of the area, to 'make a difference'.

Visitors suggest increased positive signage to raise awareness of the responsibilities that visitors have to respect the environment – signage at beaches, main streets and places of interest as well as an education campaign for tourists with positive environmental images and messages. They also want to see positive messages about how Byron Shire is achieving their targets and goals to encourage the local community and visitors and commend them on their efforts.

They identified the need for education prior to travelling – fact sheets from accommodation and videos, information centre, signage on highways into town, flyers on arrival and in restaurants, social media as well as messages to be delivered by tour operators, hotels and Airbnb operators.

Visitors wanted access to recycle bins and recycle stations around the towns and villages and supported imposing a monetary fine to strongly enforce the sustainable tourism message about littering and damaging the environment.

6c. What we learnt from Staff

Staff advised there is constant contamination with waste management from visitors. Many visitors do not understand the recycling, green and landfill waste system in Byron Shire, which leads to contamination in holiday letting properties, traditional accommodation properties and street waste.

In addition, staff have reported damage to the natural environment from an increase in littering on the beaches and waterways. Also, illegal camping has contributed to the damage seen at the Shire's parks, beaches and sand dunes.



6d. What we learnt from Kitchen Table Discussions

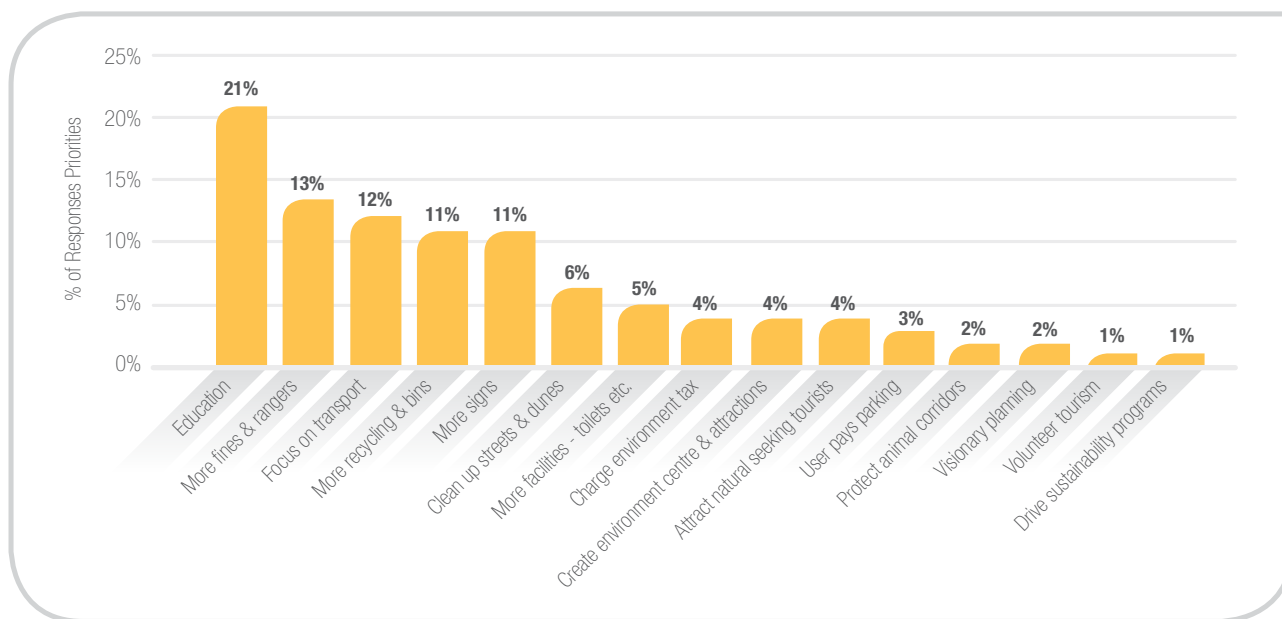
The Kitchen Table Discussions focussed on the question of ‘what can Council do to encourage visitors to respect our environment?’ This question caused a plethora of suggestions that have been divided into categories – in order to analyse. This question also demonstrated a division among respondents with some in despair over the environment while others were positive about what was already being done. Examples include:

“ I find it ironic that for an area that boasts of so much eco-awareness and change sensibility attached why do we have so many feral people visiting who don't respect the natural environment, nor the local rules” summed up the despondency of some residents.

While some were more positive, *“given the majority of the Shire's population are environmentally conscious then visitors usually pick up on that behaviour and behave similarly. Considering the number of visitors we have, the town remains relatively litter free.”*

Below are the results of the research with education being the most important action that residents see that Council can undertake followed by taking a harder line on fines and the need for Council to focus on transport related issues. What was also interesting was the varying divergence in views of what people focus on when discussing the environment. Many focussed on issues such as litter, smoking and straws *“no littering. Put rubbish in the proper bins. Bring your own shopping bags. Don't buy plastic bottles – buy a reusable one and refill it. Don't get takeaway coffee cups – bring your own keep cup. Don't feed the wildlife”* to those who focus on the natural environment, *“in Brunswick our foreshore parkland are being loved to death resulting in the collapsing river banks and huge amounts of erosion and mangrove destruction.”*

Figure 10: What can Council do to encourage visitors to respect our environment - results



The section below will highlight the range of suggestions within each category.

Education

With 21% of people responding ‘education’, this was by far the most suggested option. Education category includes education programs, behaviour changes and campaigns aimed to change social norms. Education suggestions included everything from brochures, posters to apps and courses.

Suggestions from respondents on what topics to educate visitors included recycling, environmental sensitivities in Byron Shire, indigenous culture, respect and life skills. This response summed it up, “*more education - how about a free tour/info session in summer run by Council but staffed by volunteers that explains the unique nature of our beautiful home, points out why we don’t want rubbish or smoking on our beaches, explains about rips and how to identify them, explains why recycling is important to us - why not so waste water, give an insight into the local indigenous culture etc. things that many international visitors might not fully understand - could only be 15min long run every 30mins....*”

The range of responses included:

- “ Positive acknowledgement and broad awareness of the existing behaviour change programs such as ‘Don’t Spoil Us, We’ll Spoil You’, ‘Plastic Free Byron’, ‘Butt Free Byron Shire’ and ‘Plastic Boy’: *“This is a social problem, that it will take social change to fix. It will take people not governments, to start movements to slowly start to turn social attitudes around by making it unacceptable to behave in disrespectful ways, whether it’s disrespectful to the environment (eg: Plastic free Byron). Council has made some good attempts eg: Don’t Spoil Us, We’ll Spoil You.”*
- “ There was an acknowledgement that different groups are responsible for delivering programs such as accommodation owners: *“enlist accommodation houses to train their guests on how to dispose of property and to respect wildlife”*; tourism sector *“educate/train and equip local operators on how to nurture and mitigate environmental business and visitor impact”*; community *“we need to instil a stronger marketing campaign that influences tourists, to be affiliated you need to be accepted via behaviour that is accepted”*; and tourists training other tourists.
- “ Some education was to target anti-social behaviour: *“It should be mandatory that backpacker van or vehicle hire companies provide tourists with education on how to use the surrounding area. This could be in the form of a brochure or even a verbal discussion or demonstration. Particular example is the discouragement of defecation in public spaces, using bins for litter, sleeping in allotted sleeping areas (council needs to consider this to prevent*

illegal campers). A bit of education as to why these things are bad for the area may help - some cultures don't consider litter or leaving toilet paper on the ground as an issue as it is not frowned upon in their own countries (I believe Europe is lax on this stuff). A little may go a long way."

- “While other suggestions recommended “how-to” education: “Fun educational programs, nothing too hard headed but something simple but exceedingly effective.” “Work with them on education. Simple basic knowledge of how to pickup your dog poo or what not to do with your broken thongs. Let's not make it completely complex for the visitors.”
- Some felt that education would be a waste of time: “You can't educate “fools” while others felt that locals also needed educating, “Sometimes it's the locals that need the education more than the tourists. Locals dumping rubbish, not cleaning up after their dogs etc. it's easy to blame the tourists.”

More recycling opportunities and bins

Many respondents felt that more bins were required or bins needed emptying more often in high traffic areas. One comprehensive response included, “the green Council initiatives are great - keep it up. If you want tourists to behave in the same way post additional signage and install more recycling bins in public places. Council also needs to empty the rubbish bins at the beaches more often in December - January. Overflowing bins are unsightly, evidence that Council is not willing to spend sufficient funds on rubbish collection when required and exposes the community to the risk of disease.”

Along with more bins, related responses also included banning such things as single use plastic, straws and containers. “Ban single use plastic bottles immediately. Provide more filling stations for bottles. Prohibit the use of plastic takeaway food containers and implements, straws forks etc. provide more bins and better clearer signage for recycling options/composting options/gardens etc. support, encourage and reward sustainability of all rate payers and businesses in the area.

Some acknowledged Council waste programs, “The ‘Bin ya butts’ campaign I thought clever and I guess effective to some degree. It's about zapping visitors with a simple message - something that will play on their conscience if they don't do it because it would be disrespectful to the area and their friends or travel companions will think less of them.”

More toilets, showers and free camping options

More toilets and free camping facilities were mentioned in 5% of responses. Many of these suggestions were in relation to addressing illegal camping and anti-social behaviour. As with the request for more bins in the previous section, more toilets were clearly viewed as Council's responsibility:

- “Fix up the toilets people are more likely to use and respect, clean change rooms and toilets. If we don't care why should they.”
- “Public toilets at smaller villages like Federal are needed due to massive increases in visitors.”
- “Establish designated free camping areas with a three night limit, fire pits, proper toilets to discourage illegal camping and prevent fires and damage to trees from camp fires.
- “Toilets at Brunswick Heads are a disgrace - they look like Byron Shire doesn't think people deserve 21st century sanitation.
- “I like the toilet blocks at the Gold Coast. About 4 toilets, big enough to change from swimmers and wash basins outside. I have a ritual of running the lighthouse, swimming then changing. I have to do this in the open section of the toilet and have done this ever since National Parks closed the shower section off. I think we need to accept that people need to park, shower change etc and provide facilities.”

Signs

Signs were a popular option suggested by respondents (11%). Some people wanted more signs, bigger and better signs, funnier signs, signs like in Singapore (mentioned four times) and some wanted fewer signs and questioned the sciences behind signs. Examples of comments are listed below:

- “Signs with humour and encouragement not lots of “DO NOTS”. They don’t encourage anything - don’t use “police state”. Reflect more “The cheer up, slow down, chill out signs “ to use behaviour - change and environment respect.”
- “More signs around the main beach entrances. Telling people in simple form how to respect the environment. People need pictures and in simple form. All children love reading signs and telling their caregivers how things should be done!”
- “We want to add to the sign that welcomes people to town. Love Byron and Don’t leave your litter. There could be a few signs in town and at the beaches to inform visitors that Byron is being loved to death. We need YOUR help. Don’t litter. Better still take your rubbish with you. Conserve water.”
- “Creative colourful signs that outline the fragility of this well trodden tourist route, encouraging people to leave it better than they find it. Beach signs asking tourists and locals to respect the fauna and flora - may be even identify the flora - and restrict the use of scented block out as the chemicals wash off in the water.”
- “I think the banners coming into town help, plus the signs on the beach that it’s not an ashtray are good.”
- “Replace “DO NOT” signs with THANKS FOR directives so that acceptable behaviour is modelled.”
- “MESSAGING is key. Look at Singapore as an example.”

And an almost equal amount of respondents wanted no more or less signage, examples included:

- “And get rid of all unnecessary signage on the way into town (and there is way too much) and replace it with one funky sign stating who we are as a community.”
- “Not signs absolutely everywhere.”
- “Enough signs already.”

More Fines and Rangers

In order to support the education programs and signs, 13% of respondents wanted more rangers and more fines issued to people who breach any regulations, laws or cultural norms. One respondent who embraces fining 'bad behaviour' summed it up clearly:

“WOW! That's a dangerous question to ask me: how about Council ENFORCE all of their current regulations? No illegal camping means Council staff need to visit each of the 100 or so known hotspots (early mornings & late nights) and fine those people who ignore that rule. TIP - start at the main beach carpark! Walk around the Sunrise Estate and see all those single & double garages now used as accommodation. Illegally? And all their cars parked (illegally) on the nature strips. Fine them, every day, until you change their behaviour. You already have the power - you just need to enforce it.”

Of course, there was recognition that this would impact on the workload of rangers, “more rangers required, but with an emphasis on education, not just tearing off a ticket with a fine on it. Illegal campers especially those who have no access to any toilet facilities need to be moved on, and repeat offenders fined. Maybe council can establish a hotline whereby illegal campers can be reported. Unfortunately this would involve out of hours work for the rangers. I have never seen any illegal campers challenged by a ranger.”

“Fine people whose behaviour is anti what Byron stands for” is an example that typifies the intent of fines but does not clearly articulate what that behaviour should be fined.

Fines for littering, illegal camping, anti-social behaviour example, “issue fines to people littering, that way the message is spread amongst the tourists and it becomes a precedent,” and “fine them impound cars get rid of illegal holiday lets put a road toll on for tourists the tourists are very disrespectful,” and the final word goes to another Singapore suggestion, “I still hold on to the idea that punishment is a deterrence. Eg. if it has been made clear that illegal camping in bushland is not permitted that stiff penalties will be a wake up call. If littering is an issue then become a little like Singapore (stiff fines on the spot for littering).”

Focus on Transport

Twelve percent of respondents linked the impacts of traffic to this question and have suggested that Council focus on alleviating traffic issues by suggesting increased public transport, using the rail corridor and public transport options. Examples of responses include:

“The council really needs get traffic out of Byron Bay and put in place a proper Park and Ride system on the outskirts of our town. Get on with it please. The proposed bypass is a waste of money and time. Get visitors out of their cars and make Byron Bay main streets car free.”

“Would be great to see more shuttle buses so people have transport.”

“More cycleways - the common use rail corridor would be a great start.”

“We have no public transport ... therefore everyone coming drives or hires a car and adds to the pollution density and clogged up roads parking.”

“Set up Park and Ride areas in Ewingsdale and Bangalow Road and bring back the train.”

“Have a boom gate on Ewingsdale Road, or further north to stop the tourists from coming in”.

Environment Tax

Many respondents felt that visitors should be charged an environment tax to support specific programs. Suggestions include:

- “Perhaps we could apply a sustainable tourism tax to holiday venues which could be offset in the following way: - visitors who contribute to volunteer programs are given a wristband that identifies them as contributors and entitles them to discounts at local stores. - then, where a holiday venue logs their visitors wristband certificate they receive a reduction if the sustainable tourism tax (this would cause them to encourage tourists to participate). - there should be an annual community vote on use of the sustainable tourism tax revenue.”
- “Perhaps BSC could introduce its own ‘carbon’ tax for visitors that could be put towards e.g. solar panels on the roofs of registered tourism business premises.”
- “Even enforcing a ‘plastic tax to businesses who supply the ‘big 3’ disposable plastics: bags, coffee cups & straws. Businesses can pass on this surcharge to customers to encourage them choose reusable over single use.”

Many of course mentioned the ‘bed tax’ and acknowledged the State Government’s role in approving it but respondents wanted us to continue to push the issues. *“The Council needs to introduce a ‘bed tax’. This should be approved by the State Government. As I stated in the first question, Byron Shire needs a unique approach. This will raise much needed funds.”*

Clean Streets

Many respondents felt that if the streets were cleaner, people would keep them clean. The following typified the responses:

- “Keeping the place looking green and clean would encourage the same in people, some of the streetscapes and infrastructure look grimes and uncared for.”
- “Keep it clean ourselves! Look after our own streets, beaches and community. Bus stop coming into town (Jonson St) is dirty, trashy, encourages visitors to dump their rubbish. Homeless camp out the front of the visitors centre, leave rubbish, beer bottles, etc.”
- “Maybe Byron equivalent of the Gold Coast - meter maids except they have fairy wings and green awareness, encourage good and responsible behaviour in our street ‘green fairies’. Landscaping and show that we value our natural environment.”

Protect Animal Corridors

Clearly the protection of fauna is important to the respondents, from birds to koalas to echidnas to reptiles. Examples:

- “The Shire has much more to offer than the Bay and Bruns. Council should show them that our beauty and biodiversity is at risks, from dune erosion to shrinking koala habitat.”
- “Establishing a koala corridor is an excellent initiative that will help sustain an endangered species and demonstrate community values to tourists.”
- “The coastal reserve from Brunswick Heads to Belongil Beach is the natural habitat of potoroos, wallabies and koalas. The Northern Potoroo has not been sighted for ten years, koala and swamp wallaby sightings have become extremely rare and migratory birds are disappearing. Most species in the reserve are threatened by feral animals. Locally many colonies of native animals are now on the endangered list. A terrible fate for the nature that the Shire is renowned for. The Council needs to ensure that environmental agreements with the Bluesfest and Elements Resort are upheld. Currently this is not the case. A collaborative approach between Bluesfest, Elements Resort, Eagle Farm and rural landholders adjacent to the coastal reserve coordinated by existing Byron Shire departments and policies is possible.”



Support environmental attraction and Environment Centre

Many of the suggestions were generic in nature and would require Council to work with the industry in order to deliver most of these suggestions.

- “Promoting the Shire as a progressive place attracting electric vehicles in particular i.e. leading the way in populating vehicle charging stations and Council taking the lead in using electric vehicles for their fleets. We should also promote the fact that Tesla chose Byron Shire for their first “Tesla Destination” in the world - “Amileka” at Federal. (Is every Council employee aware of this?) This is the ultimate example of sustainable living that can be promoted to the world.”
- “Strong environmental focus on attractions. Walking tracks - boardwalks, more environmental products that the right type of visitor to the shire with shared value.”
- “Have environment attractions for the predominately city and international visitor, which can be seasonal and friendly.”
- “Allocate funds and HR to redesign and enhance the ‘Byron Environment Centre in Railway Park, to become a real Byron Environment Centre staffed with guides and welcome team to greet visitors on arrival to Byron with various tours, and actions the visitor can take to live a more sustainable life while they are in the shire and away.”

Visionary Planning

Responses totalled around 2% for this category. Most responses dealt with wanting to see development in line with community expectations and the following typified the comments:

- “A commitment to visionary town planning. I went to a fabulous session at Artstate in Bathurst last year given by Frith Walker who is a Manager for Place Making with Panuku Development Auckland. She talked about the initiatives that Auckland Council has put in place to create interaction and respect between the people and the foreshore environment of Auckland Harbour. It’s an artistic integration of history, foreshore and function. Is there a town planner at Byron Shire Council who can speak to Frith Walker about their planning process and implementation. I would like to see eco-sensitive pathways and platforms built for people to walk on, that will keep them off sensitive ecological environments such as river banks and bushland walks.”
- “Good town planning.”

User Pays

This included everything from toilets, showers, bed tax and paid parking. Many of those suggesting user pays also suggested some form of bed tax. Examples:

- “Regrettably very few things are valued if people are not asked to pay. Council needs to be looking at (a) more systematic user pays (for visitors since locals already pay via rates and lifestyle impacts).”
- “Pay to visit.”

Attracting Nature Seeking Tourists and Volunteer Tourism

In order to support our natural environment, people felt that marketing, product development and the industry needed to attract the ‘right type’ of tourist – those who want to protect the environment or add to it. Indicative suggestions include:

- “Attracting people who appreciate nature and the beauty of this area automatically inspires respect for the flora and fauna and woven into that comes a desire to preserve, value and enhance.”
- “I have a sense that many existing visitors already respect our environment and lifestyle with the exception of some of the “party animals” that are only interested in Byron Bay activity. The families, hinterland tourists, celebrities who are attracted to our beautiful shire do respect the environment.”
- “Promote volunteer tourism opportunities for visitors.”

Drive Sustainability Programs

Many respondents felt that Council could do more to promote sustainable programs either with business or direct to visitors. Examples:

- “Develop a resource listing local businesses and how they invest in sustainability within the community. This may encourage visitors to choose these businesses over businesses that don’t invest in sustainability.”
- “Tip sheet in hotel rooms for tourists on how to be sustainable. For example, turn off air conditioning when out of the room, turn off lights.”
- “Mandatory sustainability targets, programs and certification for all tourism businesses.”
- “Provide simple sustainability booklet and leave with hotels / maybe one that can be downloaded and printed for people running Airbnb.”

Section 7

Sustainable Visitation: Cultural Events

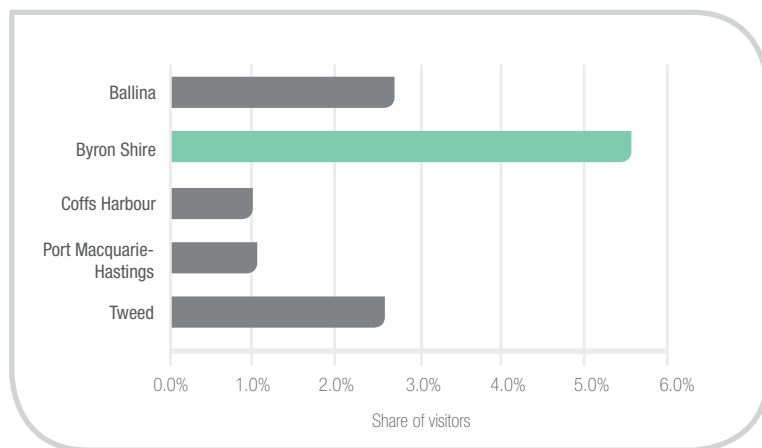
7a. Background

Byron Shire has become a favourite destination for weddings and events. World class events attracting hundreds of thousands of attendees and weddings bring large numbers of visitors to our Shire. More than 5% of Byron Shire's domestic visitors come to the region to attend an event. In the three years to 2017/18, the region supported an estimated 3.3% of the state's events-based trips, including 8.3% of events-based overnight travel.

With the success of such events as Splendour in the Grass, Bluesfest, Falls Festival, Byron Writers Festival, Mullum Music Festival and the Byron International Film Festival, the choice for locals and visitors is year-round and world class. These larger festivals and events have created an environment that has fostered the emergence of an active creative scene.

Events Travel is a Key Market for Byron Shire

Figure 11: Share of visitors whose main reason is to attend an event, 3 year average to 2017/18



More than 5% of Byron Shire's domestic visitors come to the area to attend an event.

In the three years to 2017/18, Byron Shire supported an estimated:

3.3% of NSW's events based trips, including

8.3% of NSW's events based overnight travel

Source: TRA, Unpublished data from the National Visitor Survey, 2018; Compiled by id. the population experts

This has a significant positive impact on our region as well as providing residents with world-class acts on our doorstep which leads to an unmatched local creative scene. Many household names in music, arts, film and entertainment live and perform in our region. Events also provide a wide-range of jobs and other economic benefits to our small and medium sized enterprises.

These events can bring with them noise and environmental pollution, antisocial behaviour, an increased need for accommodation and a burden on existing services and infrastructure. Unlicensed events and activities increase the need for compliance action. Considerable research has been conducted by Council into the affects of hinterland weddings and events and this is reflected in the resolved position below.

With the launch of Byron Business Events Bureau in 2017, Byron Shire is now considered one of the key locations for the meetings and conferencing market nationally. Corporates fill the gap in the mid-week and out of season accommodation and tourism product market, as well as increase the per head spend per day per person. These events are mostly held at the two large conference centres with experiences such as musicians, surfing, kayaking and physical activities also benefitting from conference delegates wanting to engage in 'Byron-style' activities.

What is Council’s resolved position?

Council resolved at the Ordinary meeting held June 2018 the following:

18-404

- Forward the Planning Proposal with the following amendment to 6(10) 2 (c) and (d), to the NSW Department of Planning and Environment for a Gateway determination, to amend Byron Local Environmental Plan 2014 to permit function centres in the RU2 Rural Landscape Zone with development consent and subject to appropriate controls relating to site suitability and management.
 - 6(10) 2 (c) ensure that all amplified music will cease no later than 8.00pm; and
 - 6(10) 2 (d) ensure that all event attendees will be off-site no later than 8.30pm; and
- In keeping with the commitment to value, protect and enhance farming in the Shire, not proceed with allowing function centres in the RU1 Primary Produce Zone.
- Agree that staff can proceed to public exhibition of the Planning Proposal and government agency consultation based on the Gateway determination issued by the NSW Department of Planning and Environment, and report back to Council as part of post-exhibition reporting.
- Investigate the possibility of implementing a registration system for approved rural function centres, and report back to Council as part of the post-exhibition reporting.



Below is a snapshot of the different views regarding events in the Shire:

Mat Morris North Byron Parklands	Jane Magnus Byron Bay Luxury Weddings	Anonymous Community Member Submission received as part of Rural Wedding Community Engagement 2018
<p><i>Festivals play an integral role in the promotion of music and arts, and are responsible for attracting many people to the Shire to attend these events. Many residents are either directly or indirectly dependant on flow-on effects from tourism, however it is recognised that negative impacts can be experienced by some residents if the sector is not well managed.</i></p>	<p><i>The wedding industry plays an important role to allow sustainable living for small business and our young local employees in the way of hospitality jobs in particular. Accommodation owners benefit from longer stays and greater spending. However we need to have certainty for our industry and we need to learn how to co-exist; the events industry and the community.</i></p>	<p><i>When a wedding occurs on a given weekend trucks start arriving days prior to the event to set up catering, marquees, sound systems etc. On the day of the wedding there are potentially hundreds of people arriving. There’s noise in the evening and into the night from buildings and tents spreads over a wide area disrupting everyone for miles around. In the following days there is more traffic to pack everything up. The on-site sewage systems on rural properties are not set up to cope with the added use by hundreds of people which will result in pollution of our waterways. Many of the roads are single lane, unsealed and pot-holed, and are inadequate for the traffic they have to deal with now and cannot safely cope with all the extra traffic.</i></p>

7b. What we learnt from Visitor Focus Groups

Visitors come to the area for a range of cultural reasons; the variety of shopping and interesting local markets, the fun nightlife, and many bars and pubs are among some of these reasons. Visitors also acknowledge that there is a lot to do outside of Byron Bay such as visiting the hinterland and towns, going to different beaches and learning to surf, do yoga and walk to the lighthouse.

We also learnt that visitors are seeking ways to enjoy nature, the beaches and the scenery in order to immerse into the relaxed culture and atmosphere they see as unique to the area. This has encouraged pop-up chill out areas at beaches and events such as the Brunswick Nature Sculpture Walk.

For the majority of recurring visitors, the changes in the area have been positive; many stating they noticed new shops and new restaurants, which maintain the essence of what brings them to Byron Shire. Some visitors mentioned it's hard to get a seat in some of the cafes and restaurants and that they could also see socially destructive behaviour, with the party scene increasing and a drug culture at night.

Byron Shire also offers a mix of events and festivals to attract people of all ages. Events are seen as unique and the weather in Byron Shire makes the festivals appealing. The positive benefits are seen by visitors to outweigh the negatives. Festivals and events are seen as good for the economy, local businesses and enhance the visitor experience. Visitors spend money on food, accommodation and facilities and share photos on social media which bring more visitors to the area.

Visitors acknowledged that it is important to remind festival goers and event organisers of the importance of respecting the area and that they should be held accountable for the impact on the environment. They agreed that numbers attending festivals and events should be limited. They also felt that event holders should be held accountable for the clean up and any anti-social behaviour. They agreed that applying the Voluntary Visitor Fund was a great way to contribute to the sustainability for Byron Shire.

7c. What we learnt from Staff

In addition to the large visitor population in Byron Shire, festivals and events require a high level of Council resourcing and infrastructure to service the additional traffic, waste and water requirements. For example, some of the liquid waste from major events is 20x more concentrated than that of the normal resident population. This puts major pressure on the Shire's sewage treatment plants and waterways.

Over the last few years weddings on rural properties have also substantially increased. Council is currently looking into an approval mechanism that would allow for weddings and events on rural properties to operate, whilst minimising impacts on neighbours.

Council staff are also working alongside large and small scale event and festival organisers to make their events more sustainable and reduce the impacts from these events. There are also challenges for some festival and event organisers to run financially viable events with the introduction of State Government legislation and policy around running events, such as the new festival regulations and safety requirements in crowded places.

7d. What we learnt from Kitchen Table Discussions

The respondents were split on their views on events. They were either vehemently opposed "*ban the events and return them to the cities. We don't need them,*" or fully supportive of the sector "*much has been done to improve engagement around festivals and events. Keep doing it – we are making progress.*"

“ Getting the balance right is the conundrum that many respondents grappled with and the following quote articulates the issues – *“Why do we need balance? It’s not to stop fun but to ensure the land is still able to survive whilst supplying all this joy to everyone. There needs to be a partnership between events and locals to keep the relationship a happy one – to go hand in hand. Discounts for locals would help as long as they met the requirements,”* while another wrote, *“how come it is so hard in Byron Shire to have balance? It does not seem to be a problem elsewhere. If a shire does not work hard to provide leadership and dillies and dallies with every decision then more and more problems will results. Learn from other locations and get on with it.”*”

“ The underlying generational change. It was acknowledged many of these events and festivals are targeting the *“young beautiful Instagram set”* which is not the age bracket of over 70% of our respondents. So are we looking at generational responses to generation change in how the younger people consume entertainment? While some would argue that Bluesfest, Mullum Music Festival and the Byron Writer’s Festival target the older demographic, these too also attract criticism. As one respondent said, *“locals need to stop whinging over every little thing. People should be able to have fun without there being an uproar over every little thing. Byron residents are appalling and this highlights the dysfunctional nature of ourselves.”*”

Table 8: Positive and negatives perceptions of events from the community

Negative perceptions around events	Positive perceptions of events
Traffic	Increase number of events in towns
Too many events	Engagement program in Taking Care of Bruns for Falls is a best-practice model and should be rolled out for other events
Too many people	Locals get jobs in small to medium and large events
Noise issues	Locals run stalls at events
Free tickets for locals	Locals add vibrancy to events and get access to global events in a regional area
More engagement	Some events are willing to work with communities for positive outcome
Send the events back to the city, Moree, Kyogle and Casino	Council continue to educate event managers
Damage to roads and infrastructure	Council to assist emerging events
More public transport	Supports local creative population
Attendees don’t spend their money in town	Environmental events guidelines
Overseas/out of town owners take the money out of town	Council has good relationships with event organisers and can assist in reducing impact on residents
Damage to flora and fauna	Support community events
Waste	Conference events fill up the weeks and reduce impact on locals
Festivals add to already busy tourism times	Events bring friends and family to the region
Seems to be a lack of understanding around Council event approval processes such as DAs, health and compliance	More events for over 55s
	More sporting events

Some additional quotes show the diverse array of opinion in our community:

- “Personally I love the sound of people enjoying themselves. I believe RU1 areas are a perfect place for events as there are no neighbours within 200 metres and plenty of parking. I don't understand the paranoid of a very few (older mainly) who seem to control our future and the prevent us from making a living.”
- “Oh my gosh. I love the big events. I have been an enthusiastic Splendour punter a few times and Bluesfest is an annual for us; love the Writer's Festival and have been to lots of other publically organised events. However I like it when I see the events telling people to respect the town if they are partying otherwise having them camp on-sight is a great idea.”
- “While we all appreciate the benefit of these global events, the impact on the environment, particularly Blues and Splendour, is enormous. It's the volume of people and vehicles that is burdening the environment and the community. Perhaps a cap is needed on numbers and a levy or fee that goes into the roads.”
- “I'm sorry I have no suggestions for this. We have two groups – one that want to make money and one who wants to party and have fun and are willing to pay. I don't believe either party gives two hoots about the community their actions effect.”
- “I do not attend festivals however there are way too many. How about a 'locals' only festival like Positano in Italy where tourists are not allowed.”
- “Too late for this question. The approval by Council of the two mega festival sites has set a precedent. There is no balance. These festivals have run this place deeper into the ground, enforced the party town image and filled the pockets of the ruthless organisers. Maximum of 5,000 attendees would get a balance.”
- “These events make a lot of money and it should be given back to the community.”
- “The current noise restrictions are not enough.”
- “Pill testing” and “Council should do drug tests.”

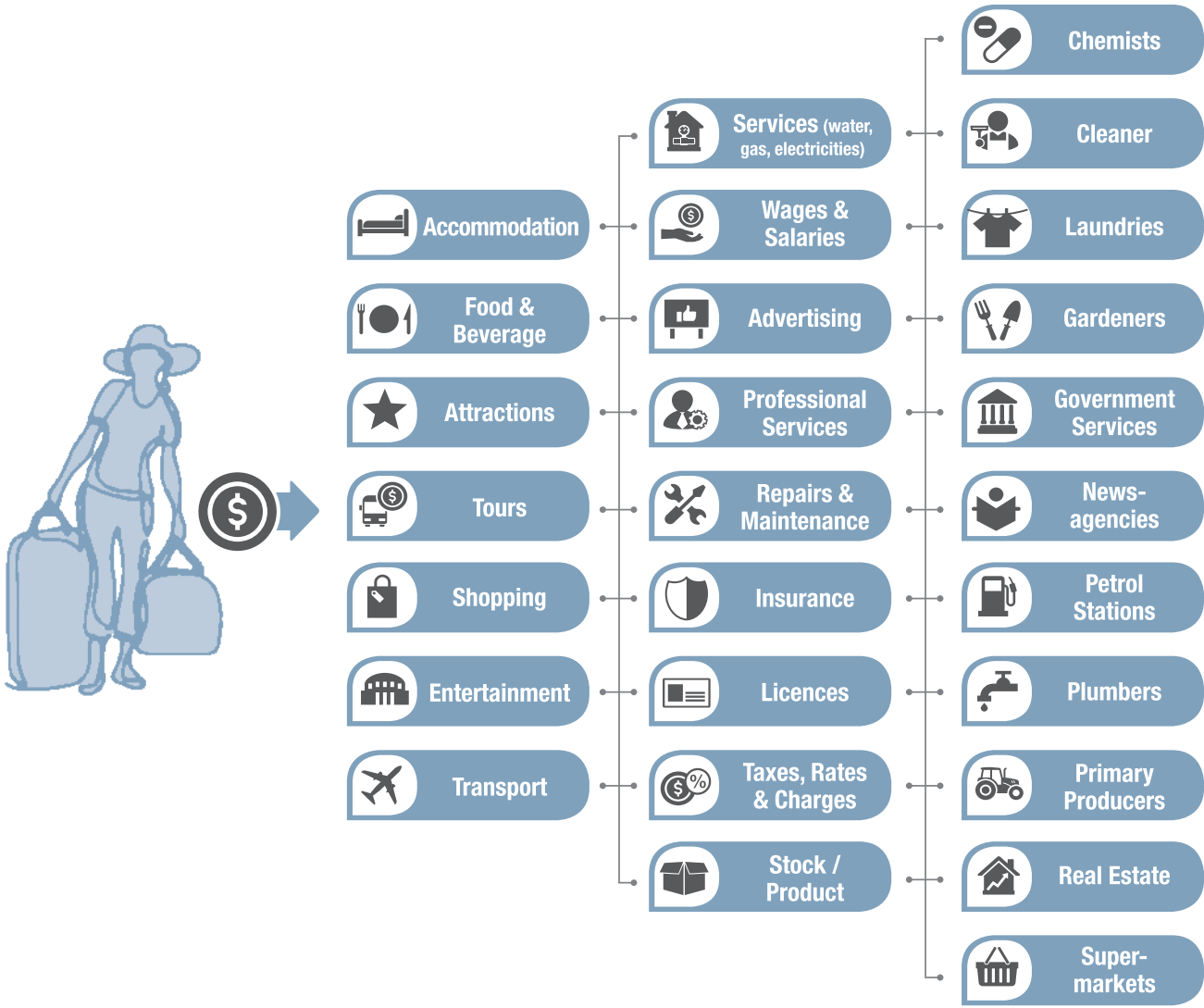
Section 8 Sustainable Visitation: Economy

8a. Background

We know that the impacts of visitor spend is much wider than typically perceived tourist businesses such as accommodation providers or tour operators. Visitors use a variety of services such as supermarkets, restaurants, cafes, bars, petrol stations and even local retail. This creates jobs and supports our local economy.

The following diagram shows the types of businesses that attract revenue directly (tours and transport and so on) while the second and third columns show the flow on of that revenue. For example someone who runs a motel pays for salaries to staff which in turn flows into the hands of chemists, petrol stations and plumbers. A strong tourism sector ensures a strong supporting economy.

Figure 12: Where does the visitor dollar go?





Below are some opinions of stakeholders in relation to the current and future position of tourism in Byron Shire.

<p>Carly Wieland Ballina Byron Gateway Airport</p>	<p>Mick Webb Byron Visitor Centre</p>	<p>Michael Thurston Destination North Coast</p>
<p><i>The key to blending the needs of locals and avoiding a situation where locals are 'anti-tourism' in our opinion is the investment by the Shire in attracting and marketing to the 'right' type of visitor. Using a mix of events that attract different demographics and building on the already strong brand the destination has, will ensure that both tourism and locals happily co-exist.</i></p> <p><i>Through leadership in tourism and investing in marketing and branding in partnership with existing and new tourism related businesses, the Shire can promote positive tourism experiences and destination management.</i></p>	<p><i>The issue of Byron becoming a victim of its own success is very real and prevalent - especially in recent years. Without some form of management plan to mitigate the increasing numbers of visitors and the effect this has on infrastructure, community morale etc, tourism in Byron Shire will, in my opinion, begin to have a very detrimental effect on the area on the whole - resulting in not only a negatively affected tourism industry but a flow on of consequences for the local population as well.</i></p>	<p><i>Clearly identifying target markets and shaping the visitor experience to suit these audiences will ensure the right mix of visitors.</i></p> <p><i>The optimum mix of high value international markets, business event visitors and domestic tourists will deliver visitors more sustainably throughout the year and increase the value of the visitor economy without having to increase the quantity of visitors to the shire.</i></p>

Voluntary Visitor Fund

The cost of servicing the visitor economy is estimated at \$23 million per year. Council has been tackling the imbalance of 2 million plus visitors per year versus around 15,000 ratepayers for some time. We hear from our community that they have concerns about lack of public transport, potholes in our roads, the general wear and tear on our parks, beaches and public amenities. Congestion during peak periods also has a social cost; a 5 minute traffic delay in Byron Bay could generate almost \$10,000 per day in travel time costs.

Community infrastructure includes much of the Shire's critical infrastructure and essential services which are provided and maintained by Council. It includes water, sewerage, waste, roads, pathways, drainage, open space and buildings and services which are used every day. In some areas, Council does not have the resources to maintain assets at the level expected by the community. This includes roads, toilets, footpaths, cycleways, stormwater assets, open spaces and buildings.

The NSW State Government did not support Byron Shire's request to introduce a 'bed tax' or a business levy (as the Gold Coast or Noosa have). Council has developed its own Byron Shire Voluntary Visitor Fund. The Fund plans to collect set amounts from accommodation providers, as well as major festivals. The fund is up and running from January 2019. The Fund is a voluntary scheme for organisations and it's based on a simple idea: if every visitor left an additional dollar or two, millions could be raised for community projects. Council has no legal way to make the scheme mandatory.

What is Council's resolved position?

Council resolved at the Ordinary meeting held August 2018 the following:

18-556

- *That Council initiate a Voluntary Visitor Fund utilising the framework and governance structure - which shows Council as the administrator of the fund, with an industry led Steering Committee.*

Council resolved at the Ordinary meeting held December 2018 the following:

18-842

- *Note the update on the Voluntary Visitor Fund with the following amendment to the fee structure: Festivals - \$1 per ticket per day.*

What has happened to date?

With January 2019 being 'peak season' for the accommodation sector, meetings were mainly held with owners who were visiting their properties over this holiday period.

Fifty sales calls were made in February and March 2019 comprising of additional meetings with providers and owners, industry representatives and booking providers. The aim was to have providers either commit to the program or provide Council with a reason why they would not be participating.

At this stage three organisations have agreed to collect the VF. These are Byron Shire Council caravan parks (First Sun and Suffolk Beachfront Holiday Park) and North Byron Parklands.

Proposed fee structure to guide industry

Below is the proposed pricing classification for industry.

Bookings under \$100	Bookings \$100 - \$199	Bookings \$200 - \$299	Bookings \$300 - \$499	Bookings \$500 and over
\$NIL	\$1	\$2	\$3	\$5

Note: at a forum held with industry in May 2018, it was suggested that only accommodation providers be targeted. If tour and activity providers and restaurants etc. added a contribution to the bill it could be argued that many visitors would pay a contribution twice. Also, it would be extremely labour intensive to administer this program with hundreds of tour and activity operators.

Some of the project challenges to date

The implementation of the WF has been met with many challenges and reasons for delaying participation or not participating at all. The barriers are captured below as are how these have been rectified or addressed:

Barriers

- Accommodation online booking systems lacking the capacity to include the WF in the booking process
- Accommodation onsite booking systems require coding to include WF fee
- Real Estate Agents are resistant to participate because of the 90 days STHL agreement
- Uncertainty around Federal and State election platforms
- Accommodation Association of Australia (AAA) advising members not to support WF because it feels their sector is unfairly targeted..
- Steering committee cannot be formed until critical mass of contributors so no projects yet identified.

8b. What we learnt from Visitor Focus Groups

Recent and potential visitors were asked about their experiences and expectations of accommodation, transport and infrastructure. For most visitors, it was noticeable that Byron Shire is more popular now than ever before, however this was not detrimental to their experience.

Those intending to visit were looking at accommodation which is near the beach, close to town, value for money, and with good facilities. Holiday homes (STHL) were preferred for families and larger groups as they are more spacious with good locations close to town, near beaches and relaxing.

Visitors who had stayed in Byron Shire noted that accommodation can be expensive, although they recognise that there are options to cater for everyone. All participants had a good experience with their accommodation.

Visitors felt Byron Shire is convenient to get to, with easy access from the Gold Coast and Brisbane, and a short flight from Melbourne or Sydney.

Many had hired a car from the airport or drove from Sydney/Melbourne. Having a car is seen to be vital in order to explore local areas, hinterlands, Gold Coast, Nimbin and other areas. The traffic was noted as worsening, being busy going into Byron town and congestion getting in and out of the villages, but on the highways it was fine. Car parking was however hard to find.

Other transport used included catching a bus from the airport to the Shire, local transport, Uber and Taxis.

Recent visitors had concerns around crowded streets, visitors leaving rubbish on beaches and expressed a need for more public facilities and car parking. They cited the very few public toilets available as being basic and dirty and they found it confronting seeing homeless people on the main street, and for some they lacked a feeling of 'safety'.

After reading the statistics in relation to the growth of tourism in the Byron Shire, visitors saw the introduction of a Byron Shire Visitor Fund as a necessary initiative and the vast majority of recent and prospective visitors indicated they would support the fund. They saw the benefit as improving the visitor experience, and improving the services for the whole area. Visitors did say they had a preference for a voluntary gratuity rather than an enforced system. A gold coin donation/donation boxes could be located in the beach access areas, restaurants and other sites.

To ensure that the scheme has the best chance of succeeding, visitors felt that there needed to be transparency about what funds are collected and how the funds are used. They also said a marketing campaign aimed at visitors was needed to drive awareness of the fund, and educate visitors about the reason why this is important. They felt visitors would be more than happy to contribute to this worthy cause.

There was however a feeling by some visitors that they are already paying high prices for accommodation, food and travel and may not be well supported and should be funded by business and accommodation in the area.

Other ideas suggested to raise funds for the Shire to sustain the increasing level of tourism include: attracting new residents to live in the area, the need to limit developers building more hotels, tolls for cars driving in and out of Byron Bay, encourage better public transport, collecting taxes from growing businesses and accommodation who are benefiting from the rise in tourism and a tax on Airbnb bookings in the Byron Shire.

8c. What we learnt from Staff

Many of the staff visitor interactions relate to compliance and maintenance issues. There are budget implications that the peak tourism season places on Council with examples identified as per below:

- Increased contractor costs during peak season for waste management.
- Increased staff resourcing for the maintenance of parks and gardens and the repairs of garden beds.
- Increased cleaning of public toilets (usage exceeds 60,000 users per month over the festive season).
- Additional hours and overtime for staff dealing with fire safety issues, public amenities and parking issues surrounding short-term holiday letting and Airbnb properties.

Over the last few years we have seen the effect that high rental costs have had on the retail mix across all towns and villages in the Shire. It has proven more difficult for home-grown business to have a shop front in the Shire due to increasing rental prices. This creates a retail mix that can only be afforded (and sustained) by the big brands and retail giants, which is not always aligned with the community's values and preferences. This makes it difficult to foster the development of local home-grown business in the Shire.

Also, many of the artisans and creative industries have moved to the Byron Arts and Industrial Estate. This comes with its own challenges as this impacts the more traditional industry estate businesses, such as panel beaters and cabinet makers due to increased traffic, noise and parking.

Two community quotes that support this change are highlighted below:

“The franchise name brand shops creeping in to town more and more to cater more so for tourists takes away from the original vibe of Byron Bay. The poor unique stores have found it hard to survive and have shut down. I'd rather see the unique stores than usual stores you can see in any major city.”

“Shut down of local, grass roots businesses due to high rental costs means that only large chain businesses can survive. This often means increased prices, unsustainable methodologies which do not align with the values and ethos of Byron Bay. The people who can afford to pay the high rental prices in the majority of Byron Bay are upper-middle to upper class who can also afford to support big businesses and are likely the ones who are bringing such businesses to Byron in the first place.”

8d. What we learnt from Kitchen Table Discussions

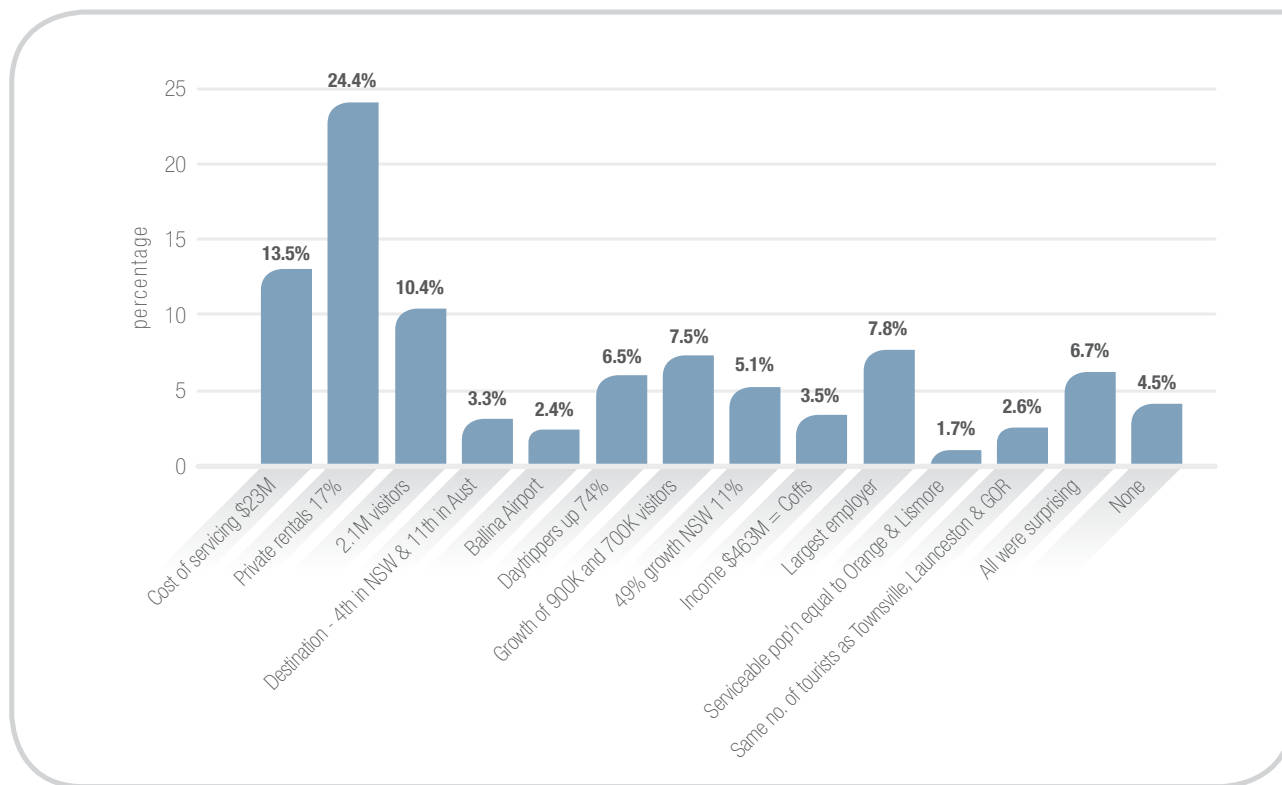
Many of the respondents lamented the lost days where you could always find a spot to park at Wategoes, always get a seat at your favourite café and going into Byron Bay was a quick trip. However others acknowledged that a strong tourism sector has meant their children have access to work and are more likely to stay around, young families have moved to the area for work and access to great food and restaurants and entertainment has been great for the locals.

Topic one in the Kitchen Table Discussion handbook introduced the community to a number of key tourism related statistics. This process ensured that everyone was provided with accurate information from a number of sources. When asked which statistic surprised them the most, the top three were:

1. 17% of domestic visitors use rental properties which is double most benchmarks
2. Cost of servicing the visitor economy is \$23M per year
3. In 2017/18 Byron Shire was estimated to have had over 2M visitors

Clearly 10% of the respondents were not aware of the size of the tourism market in the Shire. 13.5% were surprised about how much it costs rate payers to service the visitor economy. With short-term holiday letting more prevalent in Byron Shire than in most other places, being the most surprising – was not surprising. It is a key cause of both disruption and income for many in the Shire.

Figure 13: Which statistic was the most surprising?



Below are the quotes that best sum up the situation for some of the respondents:

- “Byron has more Airbnb listings than all but three Greater Sydney local council areas - this is a very topical issue locally and there are so many indicators that this is detrimental for locals and the visitor experience alike. We need to protect the essence of Byron and make that a priority in tourism. Second was 2 million visitors, third was 4 million visitor nights. I knew these already but it always strikes me - such a tiny permanent population of around 10,000 supporting millions of visitors (and there's a flow on of 2 million for the rest of the Northern Rivers LGAs as well). Very hard for the Byron Shire Council to service 2 million visitors from a ratepayer base of around 15,000 - much more support is needed.”
- “They all interested me, but to me one of the most important was the high percentage of Air BnB listings and the impact that has on affordable and available rental accommodation for long term leases. Rental costs are ridiculously high in the shire; most of my friends in the last 30 years have had to move away from here as they could not afford to stay. The costs of servicing visitors is the next thing.”
- “Private rentals. To its credit Byron has avoided the overdevelopment of hotels and high rise. This causes a shortage of accommodation. This has been filled by private rentals.”
- “Can't stop the tourists (people are free to travel and visit wherever they want in a free country) but we can improve the area and facilities to meet the obviously recorded demand.”
- “I own a licensed BnB and I bought the business because of these figures. I operate a legal business and paid for it 2.5 years ago because I believed that Byron Shire Council and the state government would maintain control over the tourism industry.”

I remember the days when no new accommodation businesses were being approved because of the stress on sewerage and local amenities. The situation is now out of control. We need the tourism, Byron Council doesn't have the resources to manage it, and yet we as licensed operators are paying increased rates and contributions with no benefit to us."

“Private rental accommodation - Because the other accommodation providers are anti Airbnb. Airbnb has taken off world wide. Why? Because that is what people want it is more value for money, it offers a wide variety of accommodation. It is friendlier than other types for accommodation. Therefore tourists like it and are more likely to return.”

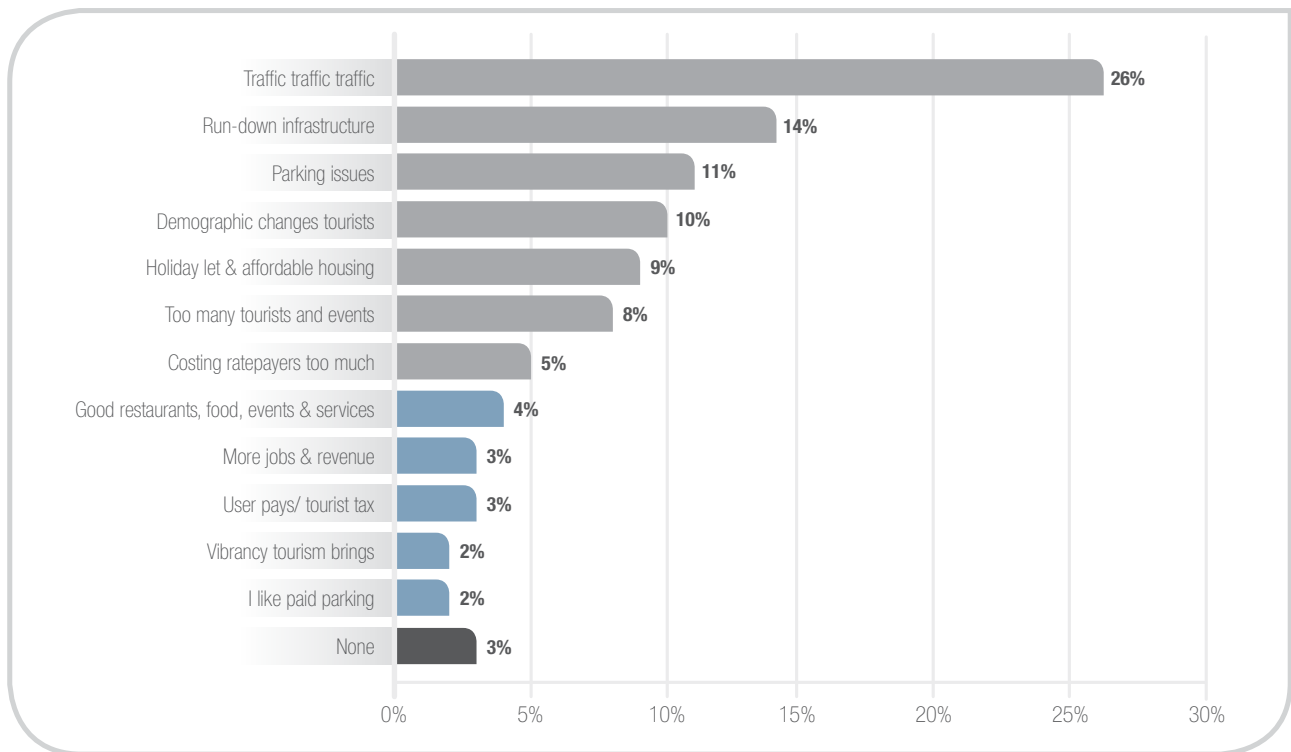
“Private rental accommodation...affordable rental properties are becoming scarce for locals. There is not enough money from tourists or NSW govt to help cover infrastructure cost and maintenance. This falls on the small rate payer base.”

And finally...

“Private rental accommodation, why? The surrounding towns of Byron (Mullumbimby, Bangalow, Brunswick) have grown dramatically and are an independent destination with retail increasing, property prices almost doubling in parts, there should be paid parking in every town to make it fair for all, allow hourly cost to drop and collect revenue to manage the shire. Even the Byron Industrial Estate is an Airbnb destination, I don't oppose Airbnb just disappointed by lack of managing from our Council. There is plenty of affordable house in our surrounding areas Lismore, Alstonville etc., no different than a commuter living in an outer metropolitan area of a city.”

What was then interesting, when asked which of the tourism driven changes have impacted you, the top three were traffic, run-down infrastructure and parking issues (with holiday letting coming in at fifth with only 9%).

Figure 14: Tourism linked impacts on the community



Also acknowledged in fourth spot was the changing demographic that visits and moves to Byron Shire. Many respondents acknowledged that with this change in visitor there had also been a change in those moving to the region –

“The feel of Byron has completely changed, the wild and spirited community that made me move here 26 years ago has been driven out by money hungry landlords and bogan tourists, wanna be hippies and yuppies.”

Some visitors are typified by these comments “yuppieisation of visitor profile”; “upper-middle to upper class who can also afford to support big businesses and are likely the ones who are bringing such businesses to Byron in the first place”; “anti-tourism” sentiment”; “cashed up wankers buying properties and hipsters instagramming like their life depended on it”; “too nimby”; “cashed up bogans”; “Illegal campers”; “backpacking scum”; “too many Queensland/Gold Coast day-trippers”; and finally a common sentiment, “tourists make everything busier which makes me feel more stressed and disappointed that Byron is losing its charm.”

Overwhelmingly, it is apparent that the community feels that the pendulum has swung towards ‘tourists and tourism’ at the expense of the community amenity and culture. Some respondents recognised some of the benefits for our community of such a large visitor economy include jobs, great restaurants and entertainment but there were more respondents who recognised that the economy is too reliant in tourism.

This quote typifies those comments that see the issues and also the benefits:

“Byron is such a lively place to live and that is a plus. Tourism dollars do generate business and council investment... restaurants, festival/events, a modern library and attractions such as the new cinema which is great for permanent residents and visitors. There are lots of downsides too... environmental and other issues, including: a) illegal camping in public streets (discarding rubbish) b) illegal development/residential use c) Poor public transport (or at least, little incentive to use) d) Traffic problems which will only increase without forward planning, rather than short term e) Poor amenities (such as footpaths) to suit older visitors, families and disabled and the Council’s inability to be able to fund basic cleaning of beach shower areas, maintenance of parks and footpaths, permanent repair of roads, additions of bike and walking tracks and improvements to community facilities such as the Byron swimming pool (which is a disgrace). Plus the Council’s inability to enforce the rules (lack of rangers) and fine those that don’t comply.”

Below are a range of comments which typified the responses to the impacts on the community of tourism:

Traffic, traffic, traffic

- “Increased traffic affecting my travels to work and into Byron. I no longer go into Byron for pleasure, only for necessity such as medical appointments.”
- “Access to and from Byron. We need to plan when to visit and leave.”
- “Day trippers are huge - The amount of traffic coming into town is astronomical - workers coming in to town morning and leaving in the arvo has become a problem.”

Run-down infrastructure

- “State of the roads appalling and public toilets filthy”
- “Public toilets that I cannot enter for fear of the stench. Pot holes absolutely everywhere and so many times when they are fixed, the work is incompetent and the pot holes appear again within weeks.”
- “Increased garbage problems and road maintenance but also far more facilities need to cope”.

Parking issues

- “I hardly ever go into Byron Bay anymore because of these problems and recently it’s become impossible to find a place to park in Brunswick Heads on the weekends as well.”
- “Paid Parking - has reduced the time I come in to surf in Byron - usually I would enjoy the Pass for 2-3hrs now that comes at a cost which is quite high for a student wage.”

Demographic changes

- “In Brunswick Heads the aggressive expansions of the caravan parks has taken huge amounts of once public land causing even more foreshore crowding. Locals living near these holiday parks had have much of their amenity totally destroyed and this has caused huge divisions between locals and tourists. Year round large groups of noisy campers are forced into a residential street causing chaos for locals. We see a huge onslaught of tourism when the music festivals are on. Large groups returning from the festivals noisily walk the streets at night interrupting my family’s sleep. There’s a drain on public facilities like toilets and the shops often sell out of essential items. The foreshores and the river are also showing the impacts of increased use, with the riverbanks giving way under increased foot traffic and the dragging of watercraft. In Brunswick, now being the music festival capital of Australia, we see a large change in demographics from families to young 20 -30 year olds and this is causing issues in the caravan parks and the pub has become much less family friendly and is now putting on bigger bands that adds to late night residential noise.”
- “House price increases/lack of accommodation for locals noise traffic congestion/lack of parking damage to the environment crowded surf conditions Around significant holiday times, the shire feels raped by the number of visitors trying to use limited facilities increased in speciality shops (food, clothes, restaurants, cafes, markets) increase in employment for youth perhaps the community is engaging more in what it wants for future.”

Holiday letting

- “I am able to rent my house out three times a year on Airbnb which provides my family some income to go away ourselves. ... I don’t want to be at home during peak times so this has been beneficial. Brunswick heads has also become very busy on the weekends (I don’t mind this - I like the buzz) Surfing the pass it is now almost impossible to get a park so I hardly ever go there anymore - which is a shame because Its so beautiful. I feel tourists are pushing out the locals - surf is very crowded...way of life is slowly changing.”
- “Higher rent prices due to less availability that could be attributed to Airbnb, higher property prices due to outside investors meaning it is not affordable to buy a home in my own region.”
- “Increased popularity in Byron means increase in rental prices. I am currently paying \$290 per week as a single person for a room in a 3 bedroom share house. Our property manager said this will likely increase when the next lease starts because the law says landlords are able to do this and do not need a legitimate reason. This situation has personally effected myself and my friends, colleagues and clients on numerous occasions. I know people who are living in their vans due to high rental prices and high competition for properties means some people can afford to offer more than the asking rental price just so they can secure the rental. This is not a privilege myself and people I know can afford.”
- “So as a licensed accommodation provider we are just a small part of businesses benefiting from tourism. As a provider we often left reviews from guests as being not great value for money. I operate one of the best value businesses in Byron. Yet compared to other accommodation and tourism areas, Byron is expensive. If you start taxing accommodation it will mean less people, less visiting, and less employment. It’s a two sided sword.”

Too many tourists

- “The sheer numbers of tourists and the events that pull them here. Triathlons, festivals, concerts all contribute. Beachcomber Dr Byron is becoming a major access point for Tallows Beach with problems with noise, parking problems, tourists wanting help, urine and faeces on lawn/driveway, rubbish, dogs where they’re not permitted. We often get 5-10 vans camping here overnight which will increase when Butler St Reserve is out of action with the new locked gates measures taken by the Council. And it’s not just tourists; semi local transients, short term residents and drifters are a problem too. This area could become a California type tent city if something is not done.”
- “I think it’s ironic that the Council are suggesting that they are working with community to resolve the issues, yet at the same time allowing all the festivals and hotels and bars which attract people to the area to happen in the first

place. In the shire I have experienced traffic, lack of parking, people sleeping in vans on my street, drunk tourists waking up my children with their parties.”

- ““My family has a small retail business in the north of the shire. In the past, Easter has been a profitable time to sustain the business through the quieter months. Now that festivals have their own in-house shopping precincts, our local business loses out. All of the accommodation near the business is taken up by festival goers and so there are less customers.”
- ““With the outrageous rent, cost of living, housing affordability most of the amazing creative people I knew here 25-30 yrs ago no longer can afford to live in Byron or surrounding suburbs. People from London or wealthy countries come and make outrageous offers for housing that puts out the average wage earner. Business and individuals take advantage of backpackers by employing them for very little wages or possibly only give accommodation for their work this makes less jobs for people who want a decent wage. People seem to think that if you work as a live-in nanny, cook and teach their kids a language and work 40hrs a week that that just about covers your rent to live in beautiful Byron Bay. The local shops do not have the charm they had... I could be in any place in the world with the same retail shops I see anywhere else....and now the shopping mall will have more of the same you see everywhere else.... The live music scene seems pretty generic to me now.... at least we have buskers again.”
- ““SO many people especially from QLD but I don’t want to single them out, walk their dogs in areas that are not meant for dogs - everyone ignores the signs and there doesn’t seem to be the money to enforce the laws and impose fines.”

Cost to rate payers

- ““Although Byron Bay centric (I live near Bangalow)... the cost of servicing visitors falls on ratepayers. We need a bed tax... among other strategies to share the load.”
- ““The Byron Shire Council roads have always been below other councils standards, this is directly due to council management of funds. Infrastructure needs to be upgraded and not blamed on tourism that creates employment in the shire.”
- ““Massive increase in traffic flows and blockages and consequent loss of amenity and severe degrading of road infrastructure. Benefits go to private individuals as business owners or employees. Consequent flows of cash to council from beneficiaries in no way compensates the public and community level. 15,000 rate payers in effect subsidise Tourism to the tune of 23 million per year. State government belligerence in not allowing bed tax or business levies is extremely counter productive if not corrupt in the general sense of the word.”
- ““The demand for continuing to service the Tourism sector resulted in the refurbishment of the Byron Visitor Centre at a cost of \$150,000. For this facility to continue to function there is a much greater need for Byron Shire Council to be directly involved in the management of the centre. It is currently a “Not For Profit” entity managed by a board of business people from the local area who voluntarily carry out the overseeing foundation. My concern being on the board myself is the likelihood that in the next 12 - 24 months it will become increasingly difficult to fill the six board positions as most of the members are now involved in other activities outside of the tourism industry. For this Tourist Visitor service to continue COUNCIL will need to take a more direct role. OTHERWISE THE CENTRE WILL HAVE TO CLOSE.”

Good food, restaurants, events and services, more jobs and revenue and the vibrancy tourism brings

- ““So many more restaurants and shops, particularly in Byron. Yes, they’ve had an impact on me, in a positive way.”
- ““It’s busier. Not always such a bad thing. Great for business and I love the diversity of people visiting the region.”

- “We have noticed more people visiting and a big improvement in the shopping / activity / eateries experience in the area, It's a great vibe and a fantastic mix of ages young and old visiting. A fantastic new hospital has contributed to health and safety. There are always the traffic issues and these will need to be managed, but most people allow for delays and inconvenience. I think it would be very sad to lose the festivals by adding too many levys and rules. Especially the Bluesfest which is now Iconic.”
- “Retail growth in some of smaller towns in the shire. EG: Mullumbimby and Bangalow have high end boutique shops, cafes and restaurants that rival big cities. The doors have opened for artists and designers to showcase their wares outside of markets.”
- “An increase in small businesses associated with tourism and hospitality in the villages, hinterland and beaches that are away from Byron Bay.
- “It is wonderful to see so many tourists and visitors who help to keep the small businesses profitable but yes the funding allocated to providing supporting infrastructure should be increased. However, I do not support a ‘bed tax’ or business levy as Council will not be able to manage this sensitively - the only leadership approach Council is able to use is top-down autocratic, coercive leadership and I don't want to be subjected to any more of Council's dictums. Power hungry bureaucrats. We should be happy to share our little piece of paradise with others and be thankful for growth and prosperity in the Byron Bay region. We have been paying Council rates for 21 years - some of these funds should be allocated to improving the infrastructure that services the tourism industry.”
- “Over my 10 years experience in Brunswick, the town has developed into a vibrant hub for all generations of people. Young, old and families. New cafes, shops and hotels are driving the economy into our peninsular (wrapped between Brunswick River and Simpsons Creek) town. I have noticed the roads getting worse and the homeless more prevalent as they are priced out of accommodation. Originally the population was very anti Holiday rental houses but since the introduction of Airbnb a lot more people can benefit from living in this location.”

Support for user pays

- “The changes are extra people and traffic they don't impact as I love the vibe the tourists bring with them.”
- “Council should publicise and openly support accommodation businesses who pay the voluntary levy. Make it a guilt trip to not pay. Support or be shamed.”
- “As a licensed guesthouse owner/bnb owner in another country we are required to add a 10.6% tax to each night's visit. These were collected once a year by the state. 60% of those funds were collected once a year by the local community council of available as grants to tourism - related organisations. The \$1 was only available to the grant program, therefore lake - rental, local lodging associations, local theatre, local farmers markets - all benefit from the grant #”
- “User pay toilets and other infrastructure.”
- “A Voluntary Visitor Fund will probably not make a difference although I appreciate Council's attempt at generating further income from tourists.”
- “Voluntary visitor fund would be better than nothing but state government needs to recognise our unique situation and grant us the means for compulsory bed tax. The funds from this could and should go towards our most vulnerable and disadvantaged and provide better infrastructure and facilities such as rehabs, emergency housing, affordable housing, aged care, environmental and youth projects.”

I like paid parking

- “The paid parking scheme has been a great initiative which has helped bring in income from day trippers and help ease parking abuse of time limits”
- “Paid parking - positive impact to us, and I can get a car spot in town. I am happy to pay a \$50 per car fee associated with.”
- “The biggest and best change is the paid parking. I now find it easier to get parking in town. I support the expansion of paid parking (with local exemptions) as a great way to raise money for infrastructure redevelopment.”

And one to end on:

- “Paid parking. Particularly at the beaches. It's not very laidback. Doesn't feel very friendly and is frankly weird to drive over potholed, narrow back roads to get to Byron and have to panic about whether the meter's been fed. Crappy cafes. When you're just employing backpackers and you don't really care, it's hard to craft a good experience. Some places have started out lovely (e.g. Targa) and but now it's like the owners just don't care about providing a good experience. You get better service at the burger place. However there are still some very good higher end restaurants - that's a positive change and we love to go there. Something else that's a real shame is that we are limited to going to Byron mainly during term time and even then on weekdays if we can. We don't go during the summer any more... which is when you want to go. Sucks when you live somewhere amazing or nearby and we'd rather spend our holiday dollars on the Gold Coast simply because the infrastructure and facilities are heaps newer and more equipped for the crowds. Similarly - and this stretches back a bit - but we would never spend New Year's Eve in Byron with all the restrictions. I know it grew out of the 1994 riots, I'm old enough to remember them, but it's just such a hassle to go. I know that's the point. But when I can have a safer, more fun time staying on Cavill Avenue in Surfers I feel like Byron could improve. And it's affected other towns around the Northern Rivers - very few host actual new year's eve celebrations other than Tropical Fruits.”

Section 9

Bibliography and References

If you would like to read further on any of the topics raised, then here is a list of documents used to develop the community solutions panel briefing booklet.

1. Arakwal: <https://arakwal.com.au>
2. Byron Shire Community Profile: <https://profile.id.com.au/byron>
3. Byron Shire Council – Tourism Scale and Impact Analysis November 2018 by idProfile
www.byron.nsw.gov.au/Business/Business-in-Byron/Tourism
4. Byron Shire Council Development Control Plan 2014: www.byron.nsw.gov.au/Services/Building-development/Plans-maps-and-guidelines/Byron-DCP-2014-and-2010/Development-Control-Plan-2014
5. Byron Shire Council Draft Community Strategic Plan: www.byron.nsw.gov.au/Council/Our-Byron-Our-Future
6. Byron Shire Council Emission Reduction Strategy:
www.byron.nsw.gov.au/Services/Environment/Climate-change/Mitigation/Reducing-Councils-emissions
7. Byron LEP 2014 and 1988:
www.byron.nsw.gov.au/Services/Building-development/Plans-maps-and-guidelines/Byron-LEP-2014-and-1988
8. Byron Shire Tourism Management Plan 2008-2018: www.byron.nsw.gov.au/Business/Business-in-Byron/Tourism#section-2
9. Byron Shire Council - Meeting Minutes: www.byron.nsw.gov.au/Council/Council-meetings/Agendas-Minutes
10. Byron Shire Visitor Profile and Satisfaction Report: www.destinationnsw.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/Byron.pdf?x15361
11. North Coast Destination Management Plan 2018-2021:
<https://dncnsw.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/DNC-Destination-Management-Plan.pdf>
12. Destination Byron Destination Management Plan 2014-2020: www.byron.nsw.gov.au/Business/Business-in-Byron/Tourism
13. Destination Byron Statistics and Research: www.destinationbyron.com.au/research/
14. Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC): www.gstccouncil.org/gstc-criteria/gstc-destination-criteria/
15. Kitchen Table Discussions Explained: www.participedia.net/en/methods/kitchen-table-conversations
16. NSW State Government Short-term Rental Accommodation bill: www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/Hansard/Pages/HansardFull.aspx#DateDisplay/HANSARD-1820781676-76993/HANSARD-1820781676-77018
17. NSW State Government Short-term Rental submissions:
www.byron.nsw.gov.au/Services/Building-development/Planning-in-progress/Short-term-rental-accomodation
18. Tourism Satellite Account, Summary of Results 2016-17 by Tourism Research Australia:
www.tra.gov.au/ArticleDocuments/254/Tourism%20Satellite%20Account%202016-17.pdf.aspx?Embed=Y
19. Waverley Council Draft Sustainable Visitation Strategy 2018: www.haveyoursay.waverley.nsw.gov.au/sustainable-visitation-strategy
20. 2018/19 Voice of Industry Series Australia and New Zealand – TRAVEL Insights on consumer preferences in researching and choosing trips and accommodation: www.destinationbyron.com.au/where-and-how-australians-and-new-zealanders-book-holidays/
21. 2019 Global Consumer Trends in Hospitality: www.destinationbyron.com.au/2019-global-consumer-trends-in-hospitality/
22. Tourism Kangaroo Island – Tourism Optimisation Management Model:
www.tourkangarooisland.com.au/tourism-optimisation-management
23. Tourism Noosa: www.visitnoosa.com.au

9b. Tables & Figures

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9c. What Other Documents might be Relevant?

If you are still keen to read up as much as possible, there is some extended reading you can do relating to the current local, regional, state and national tourism plans in place.

1. The Destination North Coast Destination Management Plan 2018 – 2021. www.destinationbyron.com.au/the-north-coast-destination-management-plan-2018-to-2021/ Destination North Coast is one of five Destination Networks in NSW and is an extension of Destination NSW operating at a regional level.
2. The Byron Bay Town Centre Masterplan (BBTCM) www.byron.nsw.gov.au/Community/Place-planning/Byron-Bay-Masterplan . The BBTCM presents a vision and strategy to guide the future of Byron Bay's town centre, and to set out realistic actions and projects to achieve that vision. It outlines a delivery time frame of 20 years, including short, medium and long-term priorities for the future of Byron.
3. The NSW Governments Visitor Economy Industry Action Plan (VEIAP) - www.industry.nsw.gov.au/development/industry-opportunities/tourism/industry-action-plan The VEIAP has 43 actions to keep the state number one in the country for overnights visitors and accelerate growth to deliver maximum economic benefits for the visitor economy. The VEIAP contains six key focus areas to help achieve the 2030 target of more than tripling the 2009 overnight visitor expenditure to 2030. The six key focus areas are:
 1. Listen, understand, act
 2. Support regional decisions, back regional NSW
 3. Put the visitor first
 4. Support, bolster and encourage the visitor economy
 5. Invest in infrastructure
 6. Make opportunities to support growth.
4. Tourism Australia – Their vision is to make Australia the most desirable (for first time visitors) and memorable (in attracting repeat visitors) destination on earth. This is the driving aim of Tourism Australia. Tourism Australia is in the process of creating their new strategic document to 2030. In the meantime their 2020 tourism strategy is still relevant - www.tourism.australia.com/en/about/our-organisation/our-performance-and-reporting/tourism-2020.html.

9d. Total Cost of the Community Solutions Panel

The community solutions panel is an integral part of the engagement process in developing the new 10 year Sustainable Tourism Strategy. Council understand that by investing in the engagement phase of the process, the outcome (Strategy) will be a better document. Below is a breakdown of the costs for the Community Solutions Panel (excluding GST).

Table 9: Total Cost of the Community Solutions Panel

Item	Amount (approx.)
RPS Group professional facilitation services (including travel costs)	\$60,000
Jetty Research – management of recruitment of the panel	\$8,000
Panel stipend – \$250 per day x 3 x 30	\$22,500
Venue hire and catering	\$2,609
Graphic design and printing of the Panel briefing booklet	\$5,708
Famil – bus hire, catering and famil bags	\$2,000
TOTAL COST	\$100,817

Section 10

What happens next

10a. Key Contacts

If you have any further questions please email the tourism team on the details below and we will make sure we prepare the answer to your question before the next Panel meeting.

At Council:

Lisa Richards and Sarah Workman

Tourism Officers, Byron Shire Council

02 6626 7170 or tourism@byron.nsw.gov.au

At RPS Group:

Rachel Fox, Lead Facilitator

RPS Group

02 9248 9800 or Rachel.Fox@rpsgroup.com.au

10b. How can I Remain Involved?

The team will be in touch regularly to communicate the next steps and key project milestones.

Also, we can add you to Council's mailing list, which provides key updates on all Council matters to the community.

Please also keep an eye out on Council's Your Say page for regular project updates – you can access the link here

www.yoursaybyronshire.com.au/talking-future-tourism

Thank you again for your commitment to your community and the future of tourism in the Byron Shire.

Byron Shire Sustainable Visitation Strategy
2020 - 2030

Community Solutions Panel Briefing Book

