

Answers to sustainable tourism questions, 16th October 2023

1. Sustainable tourism / ecotourism – how is tourism managed so that it is balanced with environment, community and economy?

Shoalhaven tourism has focused on building a sustainable economy by encouraging and supporting tourism over the less popular months of winter in order to build an economic sector that offers jobs throughout the year. The vision has been sustainable year round jobs.

Tourism research data shows that over the last 10 years there has been an 80% growth in the off-season, compared to a 20% growth in summer.

Acknowledged that might not get the balance with the environment right. The meeting was concerned about the lack of consideration to the environment. Currently the environment is considered in broader planning processes such as the LEP and DCP. The Local Strategic Plan lists 7 priorities for promoting a responsible visitor economy:

The Tourism Department would like to establish a 360 degree sustainability monitoring and reporting mechanism. This might consider the carrying capacity of areas or limits.

2. Events – how can the right balance be achieved so that events in public spaces will not overly impinge on residents and other visitors?

Acknowledged that events are activities that not everyone agrees on.

Council has a Sustainable Events policy which requires event organisers of events on public land to manage litter etc, and encourages event locations to be spread across the Shoalhaven. Location of events is influenced by funding (ie that someone is prepared to fund it in x location; and possible accommodation).

Events are seen as useful as they bring new visitors to the area, who then might become repeat visitors; event pays a fee to council, and local businesses benefit.

Some events will need to go through a formal DA process (can be given a DA permission for 5 years (events that involve overnight camping, might be in a bushfire zone, or involve liquor require a formal DA), and some will put in an application and be given a permit (for a single event or 1 year) from Council without a DA process. Events need to meet set criteria in order to get a permit.

Council offers funding for winter events that:

- Fit the community
- Require accommodation
- Offer marketing leverage

They will have to become independent and can't rely on Council funding.

Council has chosen not to generate events as the spread out nature of the Shoalhaven means it would be a huge cost to run 4 events x 49 villages per year.

Concerns raised:

around the recent food and wine festival in Huskisson where trees were pruned for the event, and the ground was covered in tents and platforms damaging in-ground fauna. Coralie was going to check as to why this happened, and who approved it.

How are events monitored / evaluated? Are there enough rangers to monitor parking etc?

Answer:

Council looks at feedback on past events and considers this in the next permit application.

What expertise exists in council to look at the environmental impact of tourism and events? Who is responsible?

Answer: council has environmental section, community development section – these are all drawn on in establishing the policies such as the local strategic planning statement, DCPs, LEP.

Council has committed to a city-wide strategic planning review (review of the LEP, and DCPs).

The elected Councillors are responsible.

Have seen poor work health and safety practices – please inform council through the Complaints and Compliments webpage.

[Report, request or provide feedback | Shoalhaven City Council \(nsw.gov.au\)](#)

3. Is there a plan as to how visitors will be managed during bushfires?

All emergencies are lead by the relevant lead agency, for example in bushfires this will be the RFS. Council with other agencies work with the lead agency at the Emergency Centre.

Council will follow instructions from lead agency.

There is no specific plan re evacuation or management of visitors.

Publicly available documents:

[Shoalhaven Emergency management Plan](#)

The identified evacuation point in Huskisson is the field in the Primary School.

Note: Huskisson Community Centre is a designated Information Hub and will display up to date information regarding any emergency, and should have emergency power and communication links to do this.

4. Short term rental (STR) accommodation – leads to significant negative impacts in a community such as loss of permanent accommodation and inconsiderate behaviour from some visitors – what solutions is Council going to try?

Council has little control over use of homes for short term rental as it comes under State control.

Byron Bay has limited STR to 60 days per year; but concerned this won't have desired effect and might focus visitation to shorter part of year.

Local Government Authority supports local councils to look for ways to address this issue. Shoalhaven Council is concerned but still to develop a strategy and is investigating the housing economy and developing an affordable housing strategy.

If you have complaints / concerns about any STR you can make a complaint on the Council website, which will be forwarded to Fair Trading.

[Complain to council](#)

Or complain [direct to Fair Trading](#)

Conclusion

- Tourism is keen to get feedback from the community
- HWCV will type answers and confirm with Coralie and Phil before circulating
- Community would like to work with tourism to build sustainable tourism

The full set of questions asked by the community probably involves more focused discussions / presentations on individual topics. It would be great to have a way to get these questions addressed in the future, without putting too much burden of time on tourism.