

HUNTER VALLEY

WINE AND TOURISM ASSOCIATION



2023-24 ANNUAL REPORT

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WELCOME TO COUNTRY

We acknowledge the people of the Wonnaruah Nation as the Traditional Custodians of the land we operate on. We recognise their continuing connection to the land and waters and thank them for protecting this country and its ecosystems since time immemorial. We pay our respects to Elders past and present and extend that respect to all First Nations people.

Front cover photo credit: The Way to Wherever

CEO REPORT

Throughout the 2023-24 Financial Year, Hunter Valley Wine & Tourism Association (HVWTA) has continued to focus on promoting, protecting, and enhancing the Hunter Valley's wine and tourism industry. We remain committed to leading a cohesive approach to market while championing the shared goals of our members. In the face of ongoing economic challenges, the Hunter Valley wine and tourism industry has again demonstrated exceptional resilience; having invested in data insights through *Localis* will help us to benchmark and track performance. I am pleased that we can now provide these insights to members helping us all to better understand visitor behaviours. Looking towards 2025, HVWTA will continue to advance our strategic priorities (as outlined below),

collaborating closely with regional, state, and federal bodies, including our valued Alliance Partners and local councils.

I extend my sincere thanks to Chris, Sasha and the Board for their support and to our members who dedicate their time and insights through committees and working groups - your involvement amplifies our collective impact.

Lastly, I'm immensely proud of the achievements made by our dedicated HVWTA team, and it's a privilege to present these successes in this Annual Report.



Jennie Curran
CEO

KEY PRIORITIES

ADVOCACY	DESTINATION MARKETING	INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT	BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT & TRADE ENGAGEMENT	VISITOR SERVICING
LAND USE PLANNING > Cessnock City Council Vineyards District Planning Proposal > Singleton Council Rural Vineyards Strategy > Heritage Vineyards FEDERAL GOVERNMENT > Wine Tourism Cellar Door Grant > Funding for Domestic Wine Marketing > Austrade Export Market Development Grant > Telecommunications Review NSW GOVERNMENT > Land Tax > STRA Review > Capacity and marketing funding HUNTER VALLEY BICENTENNIAL - 2028	ALWAYS ON ORGANIC SOCIAL MEDIA > Facebook, Instagram, TikTok MARKETING CAMPAIGNS > Digital, print, content collaborations DIRECT MARKETING > Editorial content (blogs) > EDMs to consumer database WEBSITE > SEO, Bookeasy, digital itinerary development CONSUMER EVENTS > Uncorked Balmoral MEDIA ENGAGEMENT > Legends famil > DNSW and Tourism Australia visiting media famils	MEMBER ENGAGEMENT > Quarterly Member Forums > Uncapped Connections -B2B networking > Member Engagement meetings LOCALIS > Tourism data insights and analytics INDUSTRY EVENTS > Legends Industry Awards > Wine Show Celebrations Lunch PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT > Cruise, export ready workshops, NSW First Program INDUSTRY SCHOLARSHIPS > AWRI-viticulture, wine assessment, wine technology	INBOUND TRADE > Trade Shows: - <i>Australian Tourism Exchange Gday Australia</i> > International Trade Planner > Newcastle Airport Global Tourism Project BUSINES EVENTS > Trade Shows - <i>AIME</i> > Business Events Lead Generation WINE INDUSTRY TRADE > Vintage famil > Wine Show famil > Export market opportunities	HUNTER VALLEY VISITOR INFORMATION CENTRE REGIONAL GUIDE AND MAP > Distribution partnership with <i>Australian Traveller</i> , plus over 340 hotel, airports and visitor centers WHAT'S ON GUIDES > Website and social media WEBSITE > Bookeasy, SEO, digital itinerary development > Australian Tourism Data Warehouse

PRESIDENT REPORT

As my first year as President of the Hunter Valley Wine and Tourism Association concludes, another turbulent and challenging year for our members ends, and yet the positivity and collegiate nature of this region has come to the fore.

Our region has seen lower than desired visitation numbers throughout the year, which affects all corners of our membership, however, we know that we are tracking far better than the other wine regions in our state so we must take solace in that. Our accommodation providers, tourism operators, cellar doors and restaurants continue to deliver best in class service, and I have no doubt that when the economy turns and the numbers come back to full strength, we will all be ready to capitalise on this.

The HVWTA has recently invested in the *Localis* platform that will give us better insight into consumer spending habits and movements across the region as well as provide critical benchmarking data from other regions. It is value like this that we can provide to members to ensure you have the right data to make informed decisions.

Our wine industry continues to have its back to the wall and face challenges on many fronts. Reduced spending on wine, reduced drinking habits, an industry oversupply, and lack of quality leadership at a national level has meant that it has never been tougher. These factors, coupled with the 2024 vintage being one of the lowest cropping years on record, are very challenging. Despite all of this, the Hunter Valley sits as one of the jewels in the crown of the Australian wine industry as one of the highest quality producers. As our members go to market with the wines from the superb 2023 and 2024 vintages, the Hunter Valley is only re-affirming itself as one of the best wine regions in the world; something we should all continue to shout from the roof tops.

Amongst all of this, we must continue to support our grape growers and vineyard owners as they are one of the most important pieces of the puzzle here. The continued threat of over development of the vineyard areas has us all concerned and the HVWTA recently released our Land Use Advocacy Statement and recently hosted a meeting for our locals to discuss what is currently happening, as we plan for the future. We will continue to work with members and both councils as we see this is our most critical issue currently.

Another focus for the future will be to re-engage the Sydney wine trade to ensure that there are as many Hunter Valley wines on Sydney wine lists as possible. As always, we need all our wineries to 'wear out the shoe leather' and get in front of as many venues as you can. Strength in numbers, always, is the key.

I would like to also thank both Cessnock City and Singleton Councils for their ongoing support. Through the Alliance working group we have a perfect place for all three bodies to work closely together. This group is facilitated by Glenn Gladwell from Destination Sydney Surrounds North who has always done an excellent job and looked after the best interests of us all.

Thank you to the board of the HVWTA, all of whom donate their time and invaluable skills to ensure that HVWTA CEO Jennie Curran and her team have all the support they need to ensure that the Hunter Valley is moving forward in a positive direction. On Jennie, I would like to thank you and all your team on behalf of our members for the incredible work you do. Your skill and professionalism are second to none and we are all grateful for all that you do.

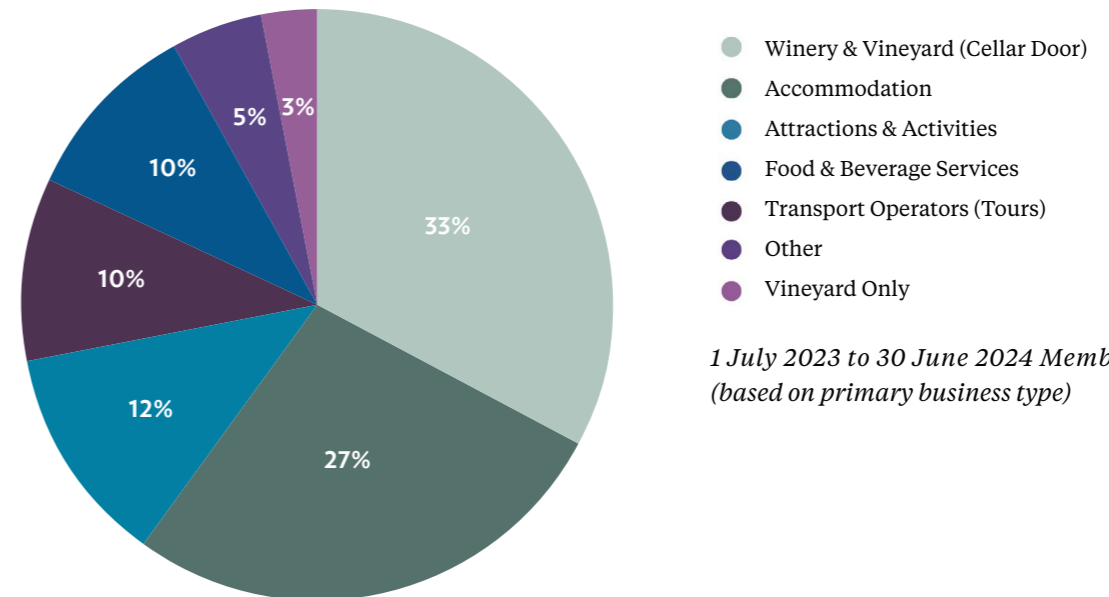
I have very much enjoyed my first year as President and look forward to serving you all, and the Hunter Valley, for as long as I can. I wish you all a Happy Christmas period as well as fruitful 2025.



Chris Tyrrell
President

MEMBERSHIP

HVWTA was funded by 255 members in the 2023/2024 Financial Year across a diverse range of tourism and wine related industries.



1 July 2023 to 30 June 2024 Membership Data
(based on primary business type)

VISITOR SERVICES



381 TOTAL PRODUCTS
UPLOADED FOR BOOKING



REGIONAL ACHIEVEMENTS



INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT & ENGAGEMENT

- > 65 participants across WSET Award 3 levels
- > 3 Wine Industry scholarships awarded
- > Over 1000 attendees at industry awards, events, networkers & workshops
- > 65 attendees at Rootling's network events
- > 84 attendees for the Destination NSW First program



TRADE ENGAGEMENT & MEDIA

- > 59 trade guests attended in region trade events
- > 2,251 media mentions
- > 9 Business Events and Inbound Tourism trade fairs attended
- > \$2.4m Business Events leads shared to operators



SUCCESS

- > 1 Bronze at Australian Tourism Awards 2023
- > 1 Gold and 2 Bronze at NSW Tourism Awards 2023
- > Broke Fordwich awarded Silver in the NSW Tiny Town award 2024
- > 5 NSW Accommodation Awards for Excellence
- > 3 NSW Restaurant & Catering Association Awards for Excellence
- > 5 Sydney Morning Herald Chef Hats 2023
- > 56 Gold Medals awarded at the Hunter Valley Wine Show 2024
- > 35 Gold Medals awarded at the Hunter Boutique Winemakers Show 2024
- > Halliday's Winemaker of the Year 2024, Liz Silkman
- > 7 Halliday's Top 100 Wineries 2024, including Tyrrell's as Number 1
- > 27 Halliday 5 Star wineries

*as at November 2024

SUSTAINABILITY FRAMEWORK

FOCUS AREA	NATIONAL PROJECTS	REGIONAL PROJECTS	REGIONAL SUCCESS & FOCUS
ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY	> Sustainable Winegrowing Australia (SWA)	> SWA Training > Benchmarking	> 34 Winery and Vineyard members and 16 fully certified in SWA
BIODIVERSITY	> National EcoVineyards Program	> 4 x Pilot sites for EcoVineyards Program and local educational workshops > Hunter Valley Wine Country Landcare Group	> Undervine cover crop trials > Native Biodiversity corridors > Native Bushtucker Garden
BIOSECURITY	> Wine Australia & DPI Phylloxera zones & mapping	> Biosecurity-Response Training > Pest & Disease Management Workshops	> Biosecurity signage > Native Biosecurity hedges
CLIMATE CHANGE	> Wine Australia Carbon Emissions Reduction Roadmap > Investigating alternative varieties	> Winery Energy Reduction strategies - Scope 1 & 2	> Carbon Neutral certification (Keith Tulloch) with Climate Active > 21 EV Charging stations > Winery Carbon Capture and Storage project > Alternative varieties planted
WASTE MANAGEMENT	> NSW EPA - Bin Trim Program > APCO	> Go Circular-Winding Down Winery waste	> Organic waste composting & kitchen gardens > EPA Bin Trim Rebates
CONTINUING EXCELLENCE IN GRAPE GROWING AND WINEMAKING	> Wine show judging > Benchmarking > Future Leaders > Rootlings network > Len Evans Tutorial	> Young Winemakers Group > HVWTA Board - Youth Advisory position > Agskilled and technical training	> Wine show judging - trainees > Future Leaders Alumni
SUSTAINABLE TOURISM EXPERIENCES	> Ecotourism certification - Balloon Aloft	> Ecotourism-Strive 4 Sustainability Scorecard	> Sustainable conferencing experiences > Indigenous tourism product development > 13 registered Hunter Valley operators (Sustainability Scorecard)

BOARD MEMBERS 2023-24



Chris Tyrrell
President
Tyrrell's



Sasha Degen
Vice President
Degen Estate & Hunter Valley Stays



Shaun O'Bryan
Secretary
Oaks Cypress Lakes Resort



Melissa Hughes
Treasurer
Strategic Appointment



Karin Adcock
HVWTA Board Member
Winmark Wines



James Agnew
HVWTA Board Member
Agnew Wines



Phil Hele OAM
HVWTA Board Member
Hunter Valley Resort



Stuart Hordern
HVWTA Board Member
Brokenwood Wines



Stephen Leathley
HVWTA Board Member
Insite Planning



Andrew Margan
HVWTA Board Member
Margan Wines & Restaurant



Ian Napier
HVWTA Board Member
Wombat Crossing



Michelle Wills
HVWTA Board Member
Balloon Aloft



Gareth Long
HVWTA Board Member
Ryldges Resort Hunter Valley
(resigned Feb 2024)



Belinda Stapleton
HVWTA Board Member
Bimbadgen
(resigned Nov 2023)



Jo Thomas
HVWTA Board Member
Strategic Appointment
(resigned Oct 2024)

STAFF MEMBERS 2023-24



Jennie Curran
CEO



Karlene Wyborn
Office Manager



Manda Duffy
**Business Development
and Inbound Tourism**



Elizabeth Preston
Marketing Specialist



Bella Murray
**Marketing and
Engagement Assistant**



Julia Moore
Marketing and Communications
(resigned Aug 2024)

DESTINATION MARKETING

WINTER CAMPAIGN

IN MARKET: MAY - SEPTEMBER 2024

OBJECTIVES

- To showcase the Hunter Valley as a preferred wine and food destination, amongst the target audiences
- To increase visitor spend and overnight visitation
- To drive website traffic visitation
- To promote events taking place across winter
- To convert existing demand.

CAMPAIGN SUMMARY

Building upon the success of the 2023 Winter 'Coming Together' campaign, this campaign continued a strategy of strong imagery, engaging video and clear call to actions. The campaign messaging emphasized the unique, refreshing and relaxing experience of the Hunter Valley, which we know resonates well with consumers.

This campaign focused on a multi-channel approach including social media advertising, Youtube and print media. With the continued power of video, the ASMR (audio sensory) Hear/Here's to the Good Life was incorporated in social media and Youtube, whilst hero images with overlay text brought the message to life on social media and print media.

GOOGLE ADS CAMPAIGN

IN MARKET: ONGOING SINCE MAY 2024

OBJECTIVES

- To capture demand generated through other marketing channels to the website
- Increase leads to operators by increase visitation to key sections of the website

RESULTS

WEBSITE

14.7k LANDING PAGE VIEWS
474.5k WEBSITE PAGE VIEWS (UP 29%)
198k SESSIONS (UP 22.4%)
31k LEADS TO OPERATORS (UP 30.6%)

SOCIAL MEDIA

1.36m IMPRESSIONS
2.75% CLICK THROUGH RATE

YOUTUBE

300k IMPRESSIONS ON YOUTUBE



Scan to watch the Winter Campaign video.

RESULTS

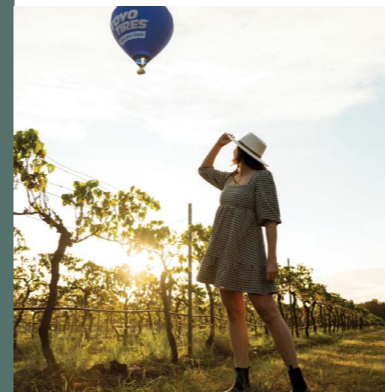
*REPORTING FROM MAY - OCTOBER 2024

21.6k TOTAL CLICKS
447k IMPRESSIONS
4.9k LEADS



ALWAYS ON CAMPAIGN

Our Always On campaign ensures that the Hunter Valley continuously stays top of mind for the Hunter Valley's key target markets throughout the year. This is a multi-channel approach consisting of a monthly EDM to the consumer database, management, improvement and SEO of the winecountry.com.au website, social media (Facebook, Instagram and TikTok) and media and content partnerships.

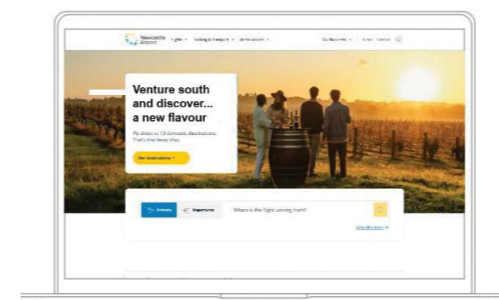
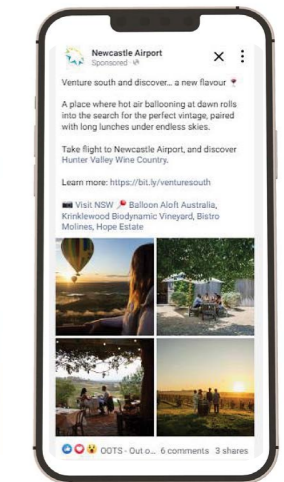
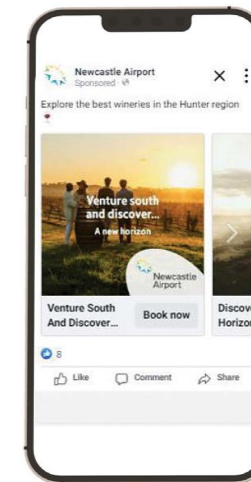
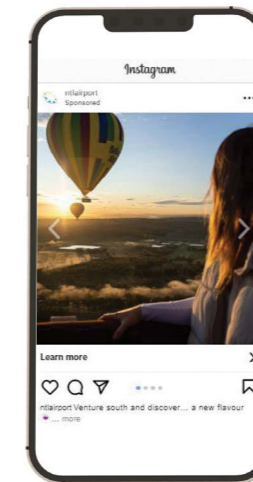


VENTURE SOUTH CAMPAIGN

Partnership with Newcastle Airport

Newcastle Airport and the Hunter Joint Organisation (HJO) partnered with five local tourism organisations (including HVWTA) to promote visitors from South East Queensland to fly into Newcastle Airport and travel across the Hunter Region.

The campaign was in market from 22nd March 2024 until the 19th June 2024 and included Meta advertising, TikTok advertising, Google, Digital TV and Partnership promotions with Sunshine Coast and Gold Coast Airport.

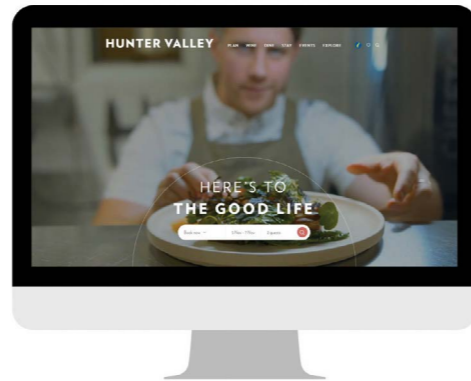


DIGITAL CHANNELS - WEBSITE

Our destination digital channels continue to be an integral part of our destination marketing plan.

The website continued to be a key tool for the region, facilitating and inspiring consumers looking to plan and book a visit to the Hunter Valley. In the 2023-24 financial year winecountry.com.au had over one million views and produced over 60,000 direct leads for our members. Three of the top five most viewed pages on the website were events related which shows events continue to be a key driver for visitation to the Hunter Valley.

Website and social media traffic is driven by organic search and paid activity.



Website Overview



Leads To Operators



Traffic Source (Sessions)



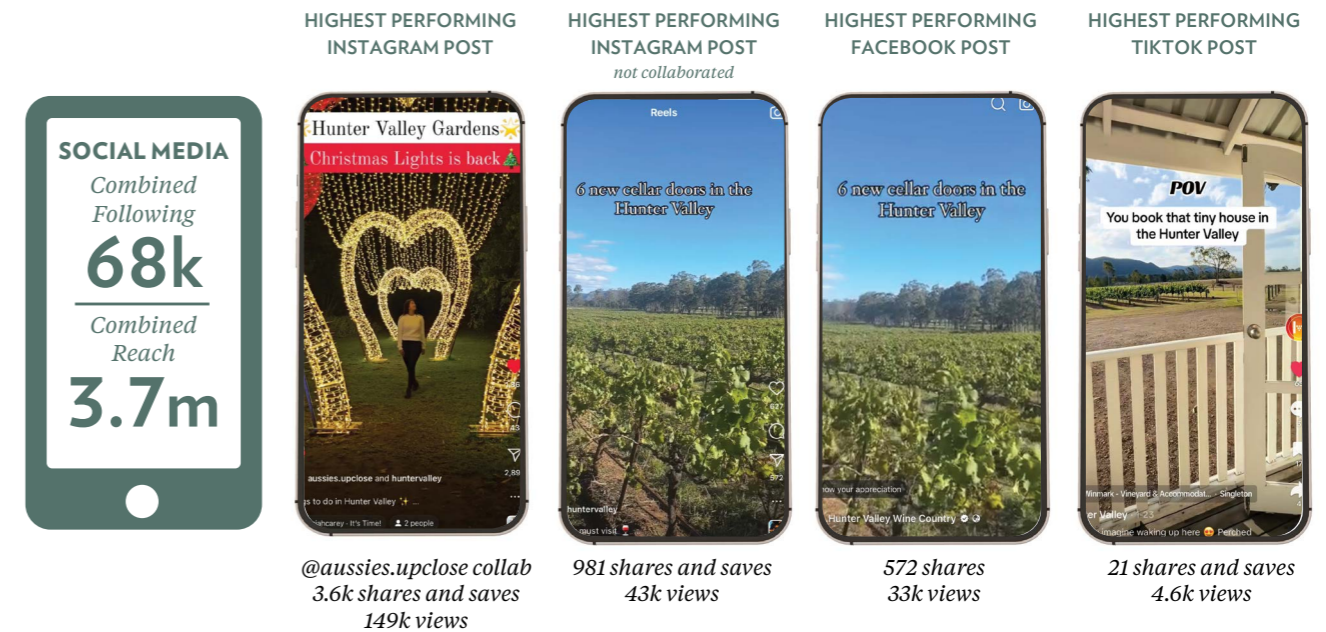
Top 5 Visited Pages



SOCIAL MEDIA

The 2023-24 financial year also saw strong performance for @hunintervalley, @hunintervalley.wine social media. We launched on TikTok, increased our work with travel content creators and continued to build reach on Instagram and Facebook with a strategy of posting highly shareable video-focused content and utilising the new Instagram collaboration tool to amplify the destination's presence and appeal.

As data continued to show the trend of social media as a key search tool for travellers, we ensured our social media was reaching more people and was inspiring consideration to travel to the Hunter Valley. We have continued to build our presence on LinkedIn, using this platform to engage with our trade, media and corporate audiences.



REGIONAL GUIDE

The Hunter Valley Regional Guide is distributed to 340 locations including Sydney and Newcastle hotels, accredited Visitor Information Centres across New South Wales, Hunter Valley venues and through a distribution partnership with *Australian Traveller*.



MEDIA & CONTENT PARTNERSHIPS

Channel 9 Travel Guides

Hunter Valley feature in popular travel show *Travel Guides* which had a total TV national reach of 2.2 million. Aired 14th July 2024.



Country Style

Inside cover double page print advertisement in the June 2024 Edition.



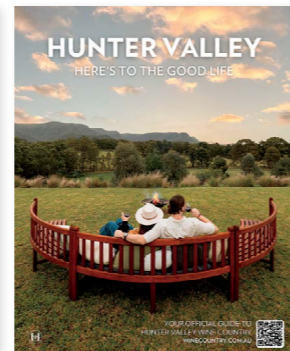
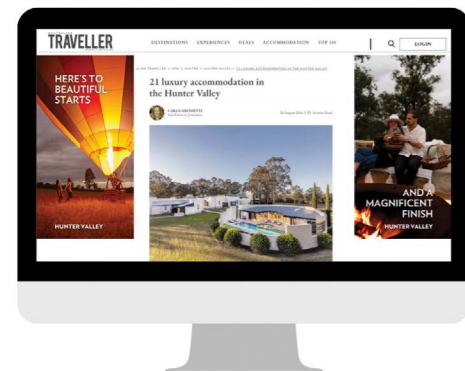
Graziher

Graziher Print Advertisement in June/July edition, podcast sponsorship and social media post.



Australian Traveller

Australian Traveller Print Advertisement in 100 Aussie Wonders, Digital display takeover, eDM inclusion and social posts in Autumn/Winter 2024 edition. Back page cover and regional guide tip on for 2024 Summer edition.

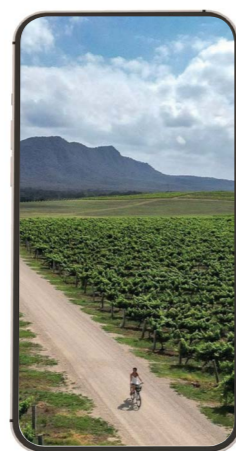


Content Creators

Content creators help amplify the reach of the Hunter Valley on social media through inspirational curated content and generate high quality assets to use across marketing activity.



Luke Lambley
154k Instagram followers



Bush and Bay
54.4k Instagram followers



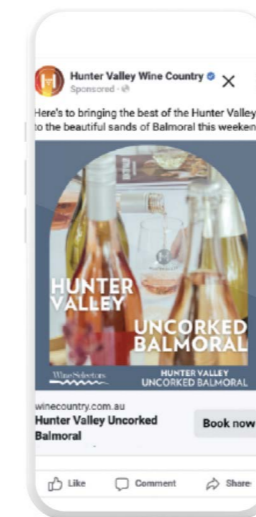
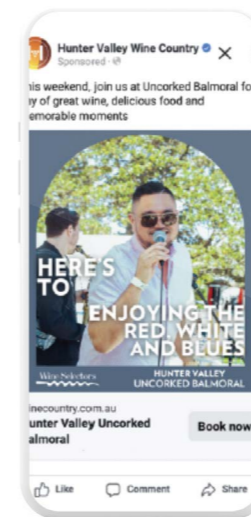
The Way To Wherever
42k Instagram followers

CONSUMER EVENTS

HUNTER VALLEY UNCORKED BALMORAL

Hunter Valley Uncorked Balmoral 2023 was held on Sunday 22nd October 2023.

Thanks to the support of the following members for joining us: 1813, Allandale Winery, Bimbadgen Winery & Night Merchant Distillery, Bonvilla Estate, Briar Ridge Vineyard, Brokenwood, Gartelmann Wines, Glandore Wines, Hungerford Hill Wines, Hunters Dream Estate, Mount Eyre Vineyards, Peterson House, Pokolbin Estate, Tatler Wines, Thomas Wines Tulloch Wines, Winmark Wines, Small Mouth Distillery, Twine Restaurant, The Deck Cafe, Oaks Cypress Lakes Resort - Oak & Vine Restaurant and Hunter Valley Cheese Factory.



TOTAL
IMPRESSIONS
646k

TOTAL
LANDING PAGE VIEWS
17k

REGIONAL EVENT PROMOTION



INDUSTRY EVENTS

HUNTER VALLEY LEGENDS & WINE INDUSTRY AWARDS

In its 17th year, the Hunter Valley Legends Awards held at Rydges Resort Hunter Valley brought together over 360 professionals and guests from the Hunter Valley wine and tourism sectors. This event celebrates our region's rich heritage and recognises the lasting impact of the Hunter Valley, along with its winegrowers, winemakers, and tourism and accommodation operators. Throughout the years, these individuals and businesses have embraced innovation and pushed boundaries, shaping the region for future generations.

We were thrilled to welcome two new Living Legends, bringing the total number of Hunter Valley Legends to 35. Colin Peterson was celebrated as the Wine Industry Living Legend, acknowledging his significant contributions to winemaking and his lasting impact on the industry. Meanwhile, John Drayton was honoured as the Tourism Living Legend, recognising his commitment to promoting and enhancing the region's tourism landscape.

HUNTER VALLEY TOURISM OPERATOR OF THE YEAR

Stay n' Sip

HUNTER VALLEY ACCOMMODATION OPERATOR OF THE YEAR

Hunter Valley Stays Australia

HUNTER VALLEY CELLAR DOOR OF THE YEAR

Margan Wines & Restaurant

HUNTER VALLEY WINEMAKER OF THE YEAR

Stuart Hordern (Brokenwood Wines)

HUNTER VALLEY VITICULTURIST OF THE YEAR

Thomas Hordern (Glenesk Vineyard)

HUNTER VALLEY YOUNG ACHIEVER OF THE YEAR

Emily Glover (De Iuliis Wines)



Colin Peterson and John Drayton

OUTSTANDING CONTRIBUTION BY AN INDIVIDUAL

Brad Russ (Tulloch Wines)

HUNTER VALLEY TOURISM INDUSTRY LIVING LEGEND

John Drayton

HUNTER VALLEY WINE INDUSTRY LIVING LEGENDS

Colin Peterson

THE ADVANCED WINE TECHNICAL SCHOLARSHIP

(sponsored by Brokenwood Wines)

awarded to Hugh Spinaze, Assistant Winemaker at Agnew Wines

We thank our trophy and Scholarship sponsors: *Riedel, Jurds, Wine Selectors, First Creek Winemaking Services and Brokenwood Wines.*

BROKENWOOD · **FIRST CREEK** · **Jurds**

AUSTRALIAN CRAFT AT ITS FINEST



PKF HUNTER VALLEY WINE SHOW CELEBRATIONS LUNCHEON

The 52nd Hunter Valley Wine Show week concluded with the PKF Hunter Valley Wine Show Celebrations Luncheon at Oaks Cypress Lakes Resort. The luncheon was attended by over 320 industry professionals to recognise and celebrate the achievements of the Hunter Valley wine industry. Angus Hughson, Founder & Publisher of Winepilot, took on the role of Master of Ceremonies. His expertise and engaging presence brought a unique and insightful touch to the luncheon, contributing to its overall success.

The Hunter Valley Wine Show attracted 76 exhibitors, with 600 entries across 29 classes. A total of 381 medals were awarded, including 56 Gold, 112 Silver, and 213 Bronze Medal, and 24 trophies. The exceptional judging panel was led by the highly experienced and respected Winemaker, Samantha Connew, as Chair of Judges with Mark Pygott, Master of Wine, from the United Kingdom as the International Judge.

"Overall, the quality of the wines and the professionalism of the show was a privilege to be a part of and I hope that the results demonstrate just how important and valid the wines of the Hunter Valley continue to be" Mark Pygott MW

We also awarded two prestigious industry scholarships; the Alasdair Sutherland Scholarship sponsored by the Hunter Valley Wine & Tourism Association, was awarded to Giacomo Soldani, Winemaker at Margan Wines and the Tyrrell Family Advanced Viticulture Scholarship sponsored by the Tyrrell Family, was awarded to Thomas Hordern, Vineyard Manager at Glenesk vineyard.

Congratulations to all trophy and medal winners.



Mark Pygott and Sam Connew

SUB-COMMITTEE REPORTS

WINE INDUSTRY & WINE MARKETING FORUMS

Young Winemakers Group

Co-chaired by Alisdair Tulloch, Kate Sturgess, and Emily Glover, the Young Winemakers Group continued to grow this year. They successfully hosted five key events, which included a series of regular tastings aimed at benchmarking various wine styles and regions. Additionally, the group played a pivotal role in the Vintage trade family activities, proudly showcasing their wines to wine industry trade.

Cellar Door Survey

With the introduction of *Localis*, a regional data insights tool, the decision was made to discontinue the Cellar Door Survey. This shift allows us to leverage more comprehensive, real-time data to support strategic decisions moving forward.

Heritage Vineyards

Led by Andrew Margan, the Hunter Valley Wine and Tourism Association continued its pursuit of both State and National Heritage recognition for the viticultural regions of Pokolbin and Broke Fordwich. Securing a State Heritage nomination requires legislative reforms, while a National listing necessitates a comprehensive study to demonstrate the vineyard areas' heritage significance compared to other regions in Australia. We are fortunate to have Professor Elisa Palazzo from UNSW, an internationally renowned expert in cultural landscapes, conducting this study on our behalf.

Educational Workshops

This year saw the delivery of many technical workshops to the wine industry. These were provided through collaboration with the NSW Wine Industry Association, DPI, AWRI, Tocal College/AgSkilled, EcoVineyards, TAFE, PKF, Investment NSW and Finlaysons, offering invaluable educational resources to industry professionals.

Wine Marketing & Trade Engagement

The Wine Industry Marketing Committee (WMC) chaired by Jo Thomas and supported by seven voluntary industry leaders and marketing experts. The WMC's focus continued to look at ways to entice domestic trade and wine media to the region. This included a showcase of the Legends Awards winners to media guests, assisting with the execution of the Hunter Valley Wine Show Celebrations Luncheon family inviting 11 Sydney and Newcastle trade to the region and an in-region vintage immersion in

February 2023 for 16 trade guests. The WMC's remit was to also support and endorse wine marketing programs including the HVWTA's 12-month Brand Marketing Plan and signature events: Hunter Valley Legends Awards, Hunter Valley Wine Show Celebrations Luncheon and Hunter Uncorked Balmoral and planning for the first time for a regional pavilion at the Good Food & Wine Show in Brisbane.

Industry Events – 2024 Hunter Valley Legends Awards and 2024 PKF Wine Show Celebrations Luncheon

The 2024 Hunter Valley Legends Awards and the 2024 PKF Wine Show Celebrations Luncheon were both successful events. Special thanks go to the Legends Event Committee, chaired by Brad Russ, and the Wine Show Luncheon Event Committee, chaired by Lisa Margan, for their dedication to delivering these industry-wide celebrations.

We would also like to express our gratitude to Andrew Thomas for his contributions as HVWTA's representative on the Wine Show Committee.

Thank you to the members of the Wine Industry Forum; Stuart Hordern, Liz Jackson, Andrew Margan, Aaron Mercer, Liz Riley, Jerome Scarborough, Lorraine St Vincent, Adrian Sparkes, Andrew Thomas, Chris Tyrrell and Alasdair Tulloch.

Thank you to the members of the Wine Marketing Committee; Kim Bickley, Rowena Henderson, Julia Moore, Brad Russ, Sally Scarborough, Jane Tyrrell and Jenna Vaughan.

Bryan Currie, WIF Chair

*Jo Thomas, Wine Marketing Co-Chair (resigned)
Jennie Curran, CEO*

ADVOCACY

We would like to express our appreciation to everyone who has contributed to representing the views of the HVWTA to Government and to wine and tourism industry state and federal associations. This is never the work of just one person but a collaborative effort, relying on several Board members and others to advocate for the interests of wine and tourism-related businesses in our region. We would like to particularly acknowledge Stephen Leathley for his expertise and significant contribution in shaping our ongoing efforts around land use conflict and planning.

NBN and digital connectivity coverage

During the year we hosted a session with *Regional Tech Hub* who offered advice and support to members

regarding internet connectivity. As announced in 2023 as part of the Nbn Regional NSW Fixed Wireless Project, a new fixed wireless tower in Pokolbin in 2025 will lead to improved connectivity from faster download speeds and better reliability.

Through the Regional NSW Business Case and Strategy Grant, Destination Sydney Surrounds North was successful in securing funding to prepare a Digital Connectivity Business Case across the Hunter region, which covered a telecommunications infrastructure review, future demand mapping and scenario planning for future connectivity demands.

Work will continue this year on continuing mobile black/brown spot issues through Telstra and the Federal Government Communications Minister (and our Federal Member, Dan Repacholi).

Land Use Advocacy

HVWTA has developed an Advocacy Statement on Land Use Planning which outlines the priorities in preserving the region's viticultural heritage while ensuring sustainable development.

We have adopted a strategic approach to influence local and state government planning policies.

The key focus in the strategy is maintaining viticulture as the primary land use in the Hunter Valley, advocating against the fragmentation of vineyard areas and the encroachment of urban developments. HVWTA stresses the importance of implementing land use buffers to prevent conflicts between vineyards and other land uses, such as residential or tourism developments. HVWTA supports complementary development that respects the Hunter Valley's rural and cultural character and promotes a balanced planning framework that allows both viticulture and tourism to thrive.

The Board has been active in member engagement on this issue, including a town hall meeting, as well as collaboration with Councils to uphold development standards that protect the region's heritage and promote sustainable tourism.

This advocacy work is fundamental to maintaining the unique appeal and economic viability of the Hunter Valley as a premier wine and tourism destination.

Wine Industry Advocacy

HVWTA work closely with NSW Wine and Australian Grape & Wine in its collective advocacy work. We have attended NSW Parliament Friends of Grape Growers events supported by MPs Clayton Barr and Dave Layzell. We thank NSW Wine and Geoff Krieger for their work advocating for a 'Buy Local' NSW Government Procurement Policy which continues to gather momentum. We thank Australian Grape & Wine for their ongoing work around trade & market access, research & development, biosecurity, WET & cellar door grant and diversity, equity & inclusion.

Tourism Industry Advocacy

HVWTA are a member of the Australian Tourism Export Council (ATEC) and support their ongoing advocacy to create effective policy to support the growth of inbound tourism into Australia. We supported ATEC's work around the strategic refocus of the Export Market Development Grant with Austrade.

Short Term Rental Accommodation

HVWTA put in a submission as part of the NSW Government Short-Term Rental Accommodation Review on the planning policy and regulatory framework for short-term rental accommodation.

The submission highlighted the critical role STRA plays in supporting the Hunter Valley's economy, particularly for wine and tourism industries. HVWTA argued that the region, largely based on agritourism, should not be subject to the same regulations as urban or coastal areas. The submission stressed the importance of minimal policy changes, noting that STRA income supports local businesses and job security, especially in a region with year-round tourism and employment needs.

On behalf of our members, HVWTA have written the following submissions over the last year:

- › Wine Australia - One Grape & Wine Sector Plan
- › Cessnock Council - Traffic and Transport Strategy
- › Cessnock Council/Hunter Joint Organisation - Shiraz to Shore
- › Singleton Council - Rural Vineyards Strategy
- › Hunter Joint Organisation – Hunter Global Tourism Strategy
- › Australian Government - Food & Grocery Code Conduct Review
- › NSW Government - Ravensworth Homestead
- › NSW Government - Short-Term Rental Accommodation Review
- › Environmental Protection Authority – Business Food Waste Program
- › EnergyCo – Hunter Transmission Project

Ian Napier, Advocacy Chair & Jennie Curran, CEO

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

Business Events

Business Events have made a strong return to the region as the Hunter Valley remains a consistent destination for the domestic corporate sector. We are seeing a significant increase in interstate business events and the beginning of international business events expressing interest and attending families in our region to understand the full scope of our offering. As a region we continue our strong commitment to this sector and acknowledge the importance by our membership to promote the always-needed midweek trade.

The two major meeting and incentives national events are AIME (Asia Pacific Incentives, Meetings Events) and PCOA (Professional Conference Organisers Association). The Hunter Valley had a presence at both events conducting hundreds of face-to-face meetings with the decision makers driving domestic conferencing and events. We will continue this momentum to keep our region top of mind.

Our Business Events Partner program continues to benefit members and expedite the quotations returned to the client across several properties. By improving this process, we aim to provide a broader range of products to the marketplace introducing them to more of our properties and experiences which delegates can enjoy.

Across the region we have seen an increase in operators wishing to participate in the conferencing and events sector and the more experienced operators have seen an increase in activity on last FY. The longer lead has returned to the sector and we are seeing less short term leads as business steadies in the corporate sector. Future growth and focus is expected as the region gains more recognition as a professional conference and events destination with new and quality product on offer across all channels including the increased connectivity provided by the increased services expected at Newcastle Airport.

Inbound Tourism

With the inbound travel market well and truly returned we have seen a change in travel behaviours by country and by traveller type. Australia as a destination is a strong consideration with conversion increasing with the Holiday (FIT) market now taking the lead by volume and the Vacation with Friends and Relative (VFR) as the next most significant volume of travellers. International spend is twice that of domestic in region with the main markets now the UK and USA with China making a slower recovery. The emerging market and our prediction for a significant increase in our region is India and Southeast Asia.

It remains very important to see international visitors who play a major role in the uptake of our accommodation, dining, and winery experiences. This market is also important in the gifting and retail space.

We were able to ensure a presence in market at an international level with agents, buyer, and wholesale trade, which was possible due to our successful Export Market Development Grant (EMDG). Key to our ongoing awareness is partnering with Destination NSW and in turn Tourism Australia and the Australian Tourism Export Council. Our team are highly engaged with the developments at Newcastle Airport and as carriers come on board, we will be leveraging our opportunities to drive trade through our relationship with travel buyers to promote the Hunter Valley.

The following trade events HVWTA attended were:

- › G'Day Australia (Tourism Australia) Cairns - Meeting with International Travel Agents 112 appointments with 320 new contacts
- › ATEC Meeting Place Adelaide - Export Ready Focus, 27 appointments and 115 new contacts
- › UK/EU Destination NSW Roadshow - InMarket, Meeting with International Agents, 66 appointments
- › ATE24 and ATE International Media Marketplace - Melbourne International Agents and Media, 112 appointments and 2634 new contacts
- › DNSW India Roadshow - 65 Inbound Tour Operators and 12 hosted for an in-region famil to region.

Manda Duffy
Business Development & Inbound Tourism

TOURISM INDUSTRY FORUM

The HVWTA Tourism Industry Forum brought together representatives from accommodation, cellar doors, and attractions, alongside the HVWTA and the Economic Development and Visitor Centre teams from Cessnock and Singleton Councils. This collaborative platform has enabled members to exchange ideas and explore strategies that support key themes of the Hunter Valley Destination Management Plan, particularly in accessible tourism, sustainable tourism, and the growth of the corporate, incentive, and inbound tourism sectors.

A significant outcome from this forum has been a renewed commitment to collaboration across the region. The forum has stressed the importance of a united approach to promoting the region and strengthening our relationship with Destination NSW and Tourism Australia to strengthen Hunter Valley's visibility and appeal.

Throughout the year, the forum has prioritised sharing ideas and strategies for inbound tourism trade engagement, bolstered by HVWTA's successful Export Market Development Grant (EMDG) application. Many forum members are export-ready and engaged in inbound trade efforts, facilitating collective planning and a more cohesive inbound tourism strategy.

The forum has also underscored the importance of robust tourism data, contributing to the launch of *Localis*, a destination data insights tool exclusively for HVWTA members, which will support more data-driven decisions across the region.

Thank you to the Tourism Industry Forum members for their time and contributions: Sara Ang, Brendan Burgess, Sasha Degen, Manda Duffy, Kim Jacobs, Kanina Mackay, Robert McGufficke, Alena Pople, Brian & Kate Rooney, Dylan Thompson, Karen Varker, Emma Williams, Michelle Wills and Adam Winder.

Phil Hele OAM, TIF Chair & Jennie Curran, CEO

CESSNOCK CITY COUNCIL

Cessnock City Council maintains a strong relationship with Hunter Valley Wine and Tourism Association (HVWTA) and is seeing the shared benefits of our Joint Tourism Services Agreement. It's fantastic having the HVWTA team co-located at the Hunter Valley Visitor Information Centre, allowing us to readily collaborate, share ideas, pool resources and achieve better outcomes. Together, we have successfully developed the Hunter Valley Destination Management Plan, facilitated events, attracted conferences, and promoted the Hunter Valley region.

Council continues to support the Visitor Economy by running the \$50,000 annual Visitor Economy Grants and Sponsorships Program and allocating a further \$47,500 to advance initiatives within the Hunter Valley Destination Management Plan.

In the past year, Council set a record by investing \$15.1 million in road maintenance, marking a 38% increase from the previous year and more than doubling the average for the three years leading up to FY21/22. We also achieved a capital works record of \$35.1 million for roads and \$65.5 million in total capital works, highlighting our commitment to delivering high-quality infrastructure that supports our community's needs.

Additional projects completed that support the Visitor Economy include:

- › *Completion of the \$602,421 Visitor Information Centre Park and Outdoor Cinema*
- › *Delivery of the \$341,249 Hunter Valley Accessible Hot Air Balloon Project*
- › *Historic Wine Press installation at Pokolbin Hill Park*

The Visitor Information Centre team have an ongoing focus to grow Bookeasy sales, increase in-store and online sales and to attract more people to the Hunter Valley and Visitor Information Centre.

Cessnock City Council is dedicated to working with the tourism industry, HVWTA, Singleton Council and Destination Sydney Surrounds North to create positive outcomes for industry and the community.

Clr Dan Watton
Mayor | Cessnock City Council



SINGLETON COUNCIL

Despite the impacts of rising inflation and cost of living pressures experienced by so many people and businesses across our region throughout 2023/2024, Singleton's visitor economy remained strong with visitor expenditure in the region totalling \$161 million (Spendmapp 2024).

Highlighting the continuing appeal of the Singleton LGA, we were proud that Broke was named one of NSW's most outstanding regional destinations by claiming silver at the 2024 NSW Top Tourism Town Awards. Building on this continued success, Council has developed a destination brand to attract visitors, residents, workers and investors to the Singleton LGA. The 'Super. Easy. Singleton' campaign will be rolled out in the year to come with a particular emphasis on our country lifestyle and events, zeroing in on a metropolitan audience.

Council also continued practical support for businesses with an industry attraction video as part of our Skills and Employment Program in response to regional skill shortages in the hospitality industry, and a hospitality skills training program is slated for later in the year.

Events

Council's flagship events were significantly impacted by extreme weather in 2023/2024. Christmas on John Street was held on a day when temperatures reached 47 degrees, which has been attributed to the slight decline in visitors from the usual 6,000-8,000 to 4,000. After months of promotion that yielded exceptional results, we were forced to cancel Firelight due to torrential rain. Our annual Australia Day eve event, Twilight, went ahead as scheduled and received excellent feedback from those who attended. Council joined with our emergency services to host another engaging Singleton Emergency Services Expo, and supported successful community-run events including, Singleton Art Prize, Around

Hermitage's inaugural D'Vine signature event, and Broke Fordwich's A Little Bit of Broke and Smoke in Broke, which all contributed to major food and wine events in the region.

Singleton Arts + Cultural Centre

Singleton's Arts and Cultural Centre continues to establish itself as a destination for exceptional exhibitions with a strong program of events and workshops in 2023/2024. Highlights included a unique collaboration with Muswellbrook Regional Arts Centre and Arts Upper Hunter to showcase the works of 16 artists who visited the iconic Upper Hunter coal-fired power station in its final days before being decommissioned. A one-of-a-kind experience was also delivered through 'IN & OF' an exhibition by artist and University of Newcastle PhD candidate Alysha Fewster which invited the viewer to step into the landscape rather than viewing it on the walls of the gallery. This was preceded by a showcase of etchings by Rembrandt. The Centre also played host to the Hunter Innovation Festival Luncheon in 2024.

Lake St Clair

Already recognised as one of the most popular attractions in the Singleton LGA, there were more reasons to visit in 2023/2024 with the installation of an RV dump point which was followed by an all-new children's playground and four new picnic shelters at a cost of \$627,000 funded by the NSW Government and Council. The playground was a key project in the Lake St Clair Plan of Management, which has also seen a wastewater system upgrade and a new boom gate system in recent years.

Social and Tourism Infrastructure Investment

Major infrastructure works were completed in Broke in the wake of flooding in 2022, including a \$1.8 million remediation of Broke Road with a new culvert, water main replacement and

resurfacing; \$1 million in road repairs across Broke village; and an \$800,000 upgrade of Broke Road at Mt Thorley. A \$1.5 million project also saw replacement of sections of The Inlet Road at Bulga to reconnect rural villages, and road safety improvements on Welshs Road now make the journey through Milbrodale a smoother one for visitors to the area's cultural and adventure attractions. Recreation also received significant attention with a dump point installed at Bulga Recreation Ground; a new playground including accessible pathways, two picnic tables and shade sails at Jerrys Plains Recreation Ground; and improvements to Broke Recreation Ground including all-new multi-purpose courts, lighting and amenities.

Hunter Valley Wine & Tourism Alliance

The Hunter Valley Wine and Tourism Alliance met four times in the 2023/2024 financial year, continuing the commitment to ongoing joint collaboration.

Singleton Council held the secretariat, chair and host role in the 2024 Calendar Year, taking over from Hunter Valley Wine & Tourism Association.

Singleton Council continued its close collaboration with Cessnock City Council, the

Hunter Valley Wine and Tourism Association and Destination Sydney Surrounds North (DSSN) through the Hunter Valley Wine Tourism Alliance and Working Group. In 2024, a focus for the group was enhancing our regional products and experiences, with DSSN facilitating several workshops and information sessions on export readiness, and how to tap into the Newcastle cruise industry.

Following its adoption by Singleton and Cessnock City councils in 2023, more than a dozen priority projects included in the Hunter Valley Destination Management Plan (DMP) have been delivered. Complementing the DMP, Council has also adopted the Vineyards Rural Tourism Strategy and drafted the Visitor Economy Action Plan.

Singleton has been proud to work alongside our tourism operators, the HVWTA, Cessnock City Council and Destination Sydney Surrounds North in what has been another successful year for our region. I look forward to continuing our achievements to enhance the experience of visitors to our region, as well as ensure the prosperity of our economy and communities.

Sue Moore
Mayor | Singleton Council



DESTINATION SYDNEY SURROUNDS NORTH

Destination Sydney Surrounds North (DSSN) is one of seven Destination Networks (DNs) established in New South Wales (NSW). DSSN comprises 10 Local Government Areas (LGAs) which includes both Cessnock and Singleton LGAs.

The primary responsibility of DSSN is to drive the growth of the visitor economy in the region to help achieve the NSW Government's vision to be the premier Visitor Economy in the Asia Pacific contributing \$65 billion in total visitor expenditure by 2030, with \$25 billion in regional expenditure.

In early 2023, DSSN released the DSSN Destination Management Plan (DMP) which is the blueprint for how the organisation will grow the Visitor Economy across our remit in line with the statewide strategy. The DMP is a combination of the collective DMPs across the region and stakeholder feedback. The DSSN DMP 2022-2030 has been developed to align with the directions of Visitor Economy Strategy (VES) 2030.

A key priority for the DSSN DMP was to maximise the funding opportunities to the region and also Digital Connectivity was raised as a regional priority. I would like to acknowledge the work that HVWTA did in surveying members to understand some of the challenges the region was having. This led to DSSN attracting funding to deliver a full regional Connectivity Audit and Business case to take to Government.

DSSN worked closely with stakeholders across the network to secure a significant amount of funding since 2018, including Product Development, Cooperative Marketing, Events, Conferences and more for the Hunter Valley region.

DSSN would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge HVWTA, Cessnock and Singleton Councils for the work delivered through the Alliance providing significant positive Visitor Economy outcomes.

Hunter Valley continues to stand out as a prominent region in NSW, offering a strong range of export-ready products and business events offerings. DSSN acknowledges this is due to the continuous work HVWTA does with product development and representing the region at trades shows such as ATE and AIME to name a few.

It has been a pleasure working with the HVWTA, Cessnock and Singleton Councils on a range of projects over the past few years that have helped boost the visitor economy.

DSSN would like to congratulate the Hunter Valley Wine and Tourism Association on the positive contribution made to driving the visitor economy

Glenn Caldwell
General Manager | Destination Sydney Surrounds North



NSW WINE INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION

NSW Wine's annual activities are framed around advocacy and the pillars in its 2022-26 Wine Industry Strategy. NSW Wine measure's itself against the key markers of 'Growing Demand', 'Regional Wine Tourism', 'Securing the Future' and its 'People'. While the past 12-months have again proved challenging commercially for wine businesses, we are pleased to have delivered against all these measures. In FY24 NSW Wine secured a significant increase in Wine Australia regional funding (\$850,000 over 5-years), expanded the NSW Rootling program, ensured the continuation of AgSkilled (\$5 million) and delivered a larger suite of trade and consumer events.

While ongoing budget cuts across the NSW Government resulted in NSW Wine receiving no direct grant funding in FY24, NSW Wine has adapted well to this new funding environment securing \$1.3 million + of in-kind or committed funding for the wine industry from the NSW Government and signed agreements with NSW DPI, Destination NSW, The Rocks and Investment NSW which all provide support to NSW wine businesses in different ways.

NSW Wine has also continued to strengthen its engagement across all political parties through its NSW Parliament Friends of Grape Growers events where it receives a huge amount of support from local Hunter Valley MPs Clayton Barr and Dave Layzell. In a constrained funding

environment strong political and department relationships will continue to be vital to securing funding and support for the NSW wine industry and NSW Wine continues to use these platforms to advocate for a 'Buy Local' NSW Government Procurement Policy which continues to gather momentum.

In addition to current activities and advocacy priorities, over the next 12-months NSW Wine will continue to expand its consumer and trade activities in Sydney to support growth in the market. Supported by the NSW Government, November will be the first 'NSW Wine Month' in Sydney with participating restaurants, bars and venues showcasing local wineries and the return of Sydney Cellar Door. While Greater Sydney restaurants continue to list less than 15% local wine on wine lists NSW Wine believes there is a massive opportunity to make ground here.

On a final note, I would like to personally thank the Hunter Valley Wine and Tourism Association for its ongoing support and engagement over the past year, particularly President Chris Tyrrell, CEO Jennie Curran and Hunter Valley representative on the NSW Wine Board Andrew Margan. NSW Wine relies heavily on regional associations for advice, support and to deliver programs and the HVWTA adds so much value year-on-year.

Matthew Jessop
Executive Officer | NSW Wine Industry Association



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We would like to thank our incredibly valuable Corporate Partners for their continued support.





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