



Regional  
NSW

# South Coast NSW First Nations Cultural Tourism Industry Roundtable

Summary Report | July 2023

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We acknowledge the First Nations peoples of the lands, waters and communities we work together with. We pay our respects to their cultures; and to their Elders – past, present and emerging.



This artwork has been designed by Mumbulla Creative for Regional NSW's Regional Aboriginal Partnerships Program (RAPP).

This artwork explores the significance of connections: connections with each other, connections with communities and connection to Country. Eight interconnected ochre circles represent the eight regional partnerships. Pathways of white lines and ochre shapes between the circles symbolise deep reciprocal relationships. Cross hatching appears on the ochre shapes, similar to the markings found on shields throughout South-eastern Australia. A large circle at the centre of the artwork represents the shared purpose of the Regional Aboriginal Partnerships Program, which is to support and empower Aboriginal communities. A rich background of lines and shapes represents Country. Gradient panels of red, orange and pink represent vibrant sunsets, while blues symbolise waterways. Ochre hills, plains, campsites, and gatherings, remind us of Country and the cultural significance of the places where the regional partnerships work. Black lines with white markings are evocative of the trade routes traversed by our ancestors. In following their footsteps, the RAPP managers continue to empower and support communities through their work. The artwork is a testament to the profound impact that strong, respectful connections have in providing better outcomes for Aboriginal communities.

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This South Coast NSW First Nations Cultural Tourism Industry Roundtable Summary Report was prepared by TRC Tourism, in conclusion to the facilitation of the Roundtable held in Moruya on 13 July 2023.

## **DISCLAIMER**

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# 1. Overview

## Purpose of Roundtable

*Cultural tourism plays a pivotal role in bridging diverse cultures and fostering understanding and appreciation for our rich heritage. It goes beyond offering a mere tourist experience, as it is an opportunity to dive deeper into the heart and soul of a community, its traditions, and its way of life. By engaging in cultural tourism, we have the power to preserve and celebrate our unique cultural identities.*

Over the past 12 months, TRC Tourism has been working together with the Department of Primary Industries, supporting Tourism Business and Marketing Plan development for First Nations Cultural Tourism operators on South Coast NSW. To date, this program has supported Business Plan development for 11 First Nations businesses, which has aided in investment and funding applications and Eco Pass permit requirements for NSW National Parks.

Additional implementation of the actions within each Business Plans has presented a challenge, with operators expressing difficulty in understanding who and what partner agency or organisation is best placed to assist them. Conversely, agencies and organisations have not been clearly aware of the support needs of each business to ensure that these needs are appropriately met.

To best support the onward journey and foster collaboration between each of the partner organisations, Regional NSW sponsored and coordinated the South Coast NSW First Nations

Cultural Tourism Industry Roundtable. The Roundtable sought to understand the value of First Nations Cultural Tourism to First Nations people, visitors and the partners, the current situation and business planning work to date, who each of the partners are and what they can offer and what opportunities and gaps existed.

The outcome of the Roundtable will see the production of an Infographic pamphlet that can be provided to new and existing First Nations Cultural Tourism Operators, supporting their understanding of the partners best placed to support them at each stage of their tourism journey. In addition, a pamphlet summarising each of the 11 First Nations Cultural Tourism businesses, where they are situated and the future support they need will be prepared for circulation to the strategic partners.

The Roundtable identified that this is only the first step towards the partners can collectively support and promote Aboriginal businesses and cultural tourism on the South Coast, with future co-design and collaboration initiatives recommended. This report provides a summary of the Roundtable conversation and commitment to continue working together in the future.

*By working together, we can create a thriving industry that integrates Aboriginal knowledge, respect, and participation. By valuing Aboriginal people and perspectives, we strengthen our commitment to social inclusion and sustainable economic growth.*

## 2. The Roundtable

### The Invitation

**SOUTH COAST NSW  
FIRST NATIONS CULTURAL TOURISM INDUSTRY  
ROUNDTABLE**

**PRIMARY PARTNERS - STRATEGIC PLANNING**

*Date Time*  
**Wednesday 12 July, 2023**  
**9am - 2pm**  
(Morning tea & lunch provided)

*Location*  
**Moruya Golf Club**  
**Evans St, Moruya NSW**

**BACKGROUND**

Cultural tourism plays a critical role in the South Coast economy. There is collective commitment to develop effective approaches to promote and preserve our cultural heritage and support local Aboriginal businesses.

The roundtable will provide an opportunity for industry and government partners to come together. We will map existing support Aboriginal businesses are receiving, discuss gaps and challenges, best practices, and explore ways to collaborate to ensure the continued success of cultural tourism in our region.

**AGENDA**

1. Welcome and Acknowledgement of Country
2. About today
3. Introductions
4. South Coast Cultural Tourism Story
5. About the partners - brief 5-10 min. presentation from each of the participants about your role in supporting South Coast cultural tourism.
6. Working together workshop (collaborative planning)
7. Next steps - mapping a pathway forward.

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## Participants

Participant	Organisation
Ian Kerr	Department of Primary Industries
Laura Hartley	Regional NSW
Shane Dredge	NSW Aboriginal Tourism Operators Council (NATOC) / TRC Tourism
Jenny Robb	Destination Southern NSW
Felicity Richards	Eurobodalla Shire Council
Lana Callaghan	Department of Aboriginal Affairs
Ray Smith	National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA)
Rhys Treloar	Sapphire Coast Tourism / Bega Valley Shire Council
Robyn Johnson	South Coast Centre of Excellence
Elizabeth Rankin	Eurobodalla Shire Council
Thomas Soccio	Department of Planning and Environment
Scott Baker	Regional NSW
Jean-Pierre Issaverdis	NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service
Richard Everson	Destination Southern NSW
Sharda Carpenter	NIAA (brief attendance only)
Ray Smith	NIAA
Marcus Arvidson	Two Fold Aboriginal Corporation
Joanne Issaverdis	NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service
Seth Merit	Department of Aboriginal Affairs

## Apologies

- Sarah Gorst – Regional NSW
- Gerard Dennis – Department of Primary Industries
- Dwayne Bannon-Harrison – NATOC
- Shannan Perry-Hall – Destination Sydney Surrounds South
- Nellie Johnson – NIAA
- Tim Stevenson – Aboriginal Land Council
- Kane Weeks – NSW National Parks and Wildlife
- Tim Donovan – Department of Primary Industries
- Andrew Gary – South East Arts
- Karen Dempster – Enterprise Plus
- Anna Wylie – Regional NSW
- Scott Morgan – Regional NSW.

## Agenda

Time	Agenda item
9.30am	<b>Welcome and Acknowledgement of Country</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Welcome to Country (TBC)</li> <li>Sarah Gorst (Regional NSW) Acknowledgement of Country</li> </ul>
9.40am	<b>About today</b> Sarah Gorst (Regional NSW) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What are the objectives and desired outcomes</li> <li>Introduction to TRC facilitators</li> </ul>
9.45am	<b>Introductions (TRC Tourism)</b> Brief introductions from Roundtable participants (couple of sentences each) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Who you are</li> <li>Where you are from</li> <li>What are you hoping to get out of today's roundtable?</li> </ul>
10.00am	<b>South Coast First Nations Tourism Story</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mentimeter survey – value of First Nations Tourism</li> <li>Presentation of recent business planning work, common findings (priorities / needs) – Tracey (TRC Tourism)</li> <li>Case studies – brief presentations from 1 or 2 operators on the business planning process, what has worked / where more support is needed, what are the priorities and gaps for cultural tourism businesses (Malleema Tours, Muladha Gamara)</li> </ul>
10.30am	<b>About the partners</b> Brief (10 min) overview from each of the participants on their involvement / support with cultural tourism in the South Coast region. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How does Cultural Tourism align with your organisation's strategic priorities?</li> <li>What support are you currently providing or planning to provide (including funding opportunities)?</li> <li>What opportunities or gaps have you encountered with Cultural Tourism?</li> </ul>
11.30am	<b>Morning Tea (15 mins)</b>
11.45am	<b>Workshop – Working together</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Talking about priorities.</li> <li>What are First Nations cultural tourism operator priorities?</li> <li>Can we meet these? Who and how?</li> <li>What gaps exist or new strategic opportunities have been created?</li> </ul>
12.45pm	<b>Next steps – mapping a pathway forward</b> Beyond the Infographic – what else is needed?
1.15pm	Other comments and concluding remarks  Regional NSW / DPI
1.30pm	<b>Close, acknowledgements and lunch</b>







## 4. The South Coast First Nations Cultural Tourism Story

TRC Tourism consultant Tracey Diddams provided an overview of business planning work over the last 12 months with First Nations Cultural Tourism operators on the South Coast.

### Why do First Nations Cultural Tourism operators need a business plan?

- To articulate our vision and our goals
- Define our products, services and experiences and our point of difference
- To apply for funding
- To set up our business structure
- To gain professional support and advice on successfully conducting a tourism business
- To determine business and product feasibility and viability
- To grow my business
- To apply for an Eco Pass
- To grow our capability and capacity
- To identify target markets, marketing approaches and become 'market ready'
- To understand what opportunities are available
- To review our weaknesses and risks and develop strategies to mitigate these
- To guide our work into the future with a clear Action Plan
- For business sustainability.

### What further support is required?

Within each business plan, operators identified a range of future support needs to grow business capacity, product development, investment and sustainability. Key priorities included:

- Marketing plan and implementation
- Operations plan, organizational structure and HR policies, procedures and systems
- Administration support
- Branding and positioning
- Website and booking system
- Training program, in particular leadership and business management for the Directors and tour guide / presentation training for new staff, career pathways for young people (succession planning)
- Transport (vehicle) for staff, tours and community on Country activities
- New product development planning, property, assets, equipment and appropriate storage
- Office space, office equipment
- Financial advice and training in accounting systems
- Future product development support and feasibility assessment towards market readiness
- Funding / investment
- Community program funding (development as a social enterprise / not for profit arm of business)
- Business legal advice for corporate structure, contractual arrangements and partnerships.

## About the businesses



SOUTH COAST FIRST NATIONS CULTURAL TOURISM BUSINESSES THAT HAVE PARTICIPATED IN DPI'S BUSINESS PLANNING PROGRAM WITH TRC TOURISM



## 5. The Partners

### 5.1 How each partner currently supports First Nations Cultural Tourism

Partner	Support offered
<b>NATOC</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aboriginal tourism industry voice and advocacy</li> <li>• Networking with Destination networks</li> <li>• Mentoring and business planning support</li> </ul>
<b>Sapphire Coast Tourism</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Destination agency</li> <li>• Tourism marketing</li> <li>• Business support</li> <li>• Communications</li> <li>• Visitor interpretation</li> <li>• Product development</li> </ul>
<b>Department of Planning and Environment</b>  Planning and Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Economic development</li> <li>• Housing, services and infrastructure</li> <li>• Improved access</li> <li>• Place strategy – Aboriginal land recognition, community, living and working</li> </ul>
<b>Regional NSW</b>  	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify plan and support regionally significant projects</li> <li>• Support south east emerging Aboriginal Businesses (e.g. Cultural Tourism)</li> <li>• Support Businesses in establishing culturally aware/safe workplace strategies</li> <li>• Facilitate and support activities that drive economic diversity and sustainability</li> <li>• Regional Aboriginal Partnerships Program (RAPP)</li> <li>• Famil of cultural tourism experiences across the South Coast</li> <li>• Business development through Economic Development Manager role</li> </ul>

Partner	Support offered
<b>South Coast Centre of Excellence</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Capacity building (tourism &amp; hospitality)</li> <li>• Famil tours</li> <li>• Mentoring and professional development</li> </ul>
<b>Department of Primary Industries</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preliminary business assessment</li> <li>• Training (marine skills, tour guiding)</li> <li>• Capital funding</li> <li>• Business planning program (5 year funded program)</li> </ul>
<b>Destination Southern NSW</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Destination branding / positioning</li> <li>• Events</li> <li>• Regional development</li> <li>• Advocacy</li> <li>• Industry development</li> </ul>
<b>NSW National Parks</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Eco Pass program</li> <li>• Small &amp; large scale events on park</li> <li>• Co-management of all NSW National Parks</li> <li>• Growing cultural tourism opportunities and partnerships on Country</li> <li>• Sharing appropriate stories on Country</li> <li>• Educating tour operators and visitors about appropriate access, use, cultural protocols and stories</li> <li>• Collaboration with NATOC</li> <li>• Development and sharing of operator experience videos.</li> </ul>
<b>Eurobodalla Shire Council</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aboriginal Advisory Committee</li> <li>• Cultural Awareness training</li> <li>• Content creation</li> <li>• Visitor interpretation</li> <li>• Eurobodalla Destination Action Plan 2018-2021</li> <li>• Galleries and cultural centres</li> <li>• Local events (community based and major events)</li> </ul>
<b>Bega Valley Shire Council</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community engagement</li> <li>• Operational planning</li> <li>• Regional marketing (through Sapphire Coast Tourism)</li> <li>• Business Activate Program</li> </ul>

<p><b>Two Fold Aboriginal Corporation</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training – business planning and development</li> <li>• Property as business venture, cultural tourism opportunity</li> <li>• Employment</li> <li>• Australian National University partnership</li> </ul>
<p><b>South East Arts</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Business support and skills development for artists</li> <li>• Mentoring</li> <li>• Events and festivals</li> <li>• Employment of Aboriginal artists.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cultural advocacy</li> <li>• Cultural Grant Funding – Aboriginal businesses and community organisations</li> <li>• Policy and Program</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grant Funding</li> <li>• Cultural Tourism Mentoring</li> <li>• Aboriginal Business Support.</li> </ul>

Presentations from a range of the partners shared at the Roundtable can be viewed in Appendix A.

## Other future partners

Roundtable participants suggested a range of partners to include in future First Nations Cultural Tourism networking and framework / toolkit development. Suggestions included:

- Service NSW – Aboriginal Business Advisory Initiative
- Indigenous Business Australia
- Supply Nation
- Tourism Australia – Discover Aboriginal Experiences Signature Program
- Forestry
- Marine
- Crown Land representatives
- Universities to provide research and capacity / resourcing support (student placements)
- Parks Australia
- Land Councils
- Sarah Allen, Product Manager - Aboriginal Experiences at Destination NSW ([sarah.allen@dsw.com.au](mailto:sarah.allen@dsw.com.au))
- TAFE, training organisations, Training Services NSW and skill based agencies on the ground (e.g., Job Shop)
- Insurance companies / brokers to assist with liability and insurance needs
- Cross border partnerships – Victoria, Canberra / ACT, Sydney and Surrounds
- Many Rivers
- Yarpa
- Ochre
- Strong Spirits
- Port Authority of NSW/Cruise Eden.



## 6. Opportunities and Challenges

In Roundtable discussions, the partners identified the below opportunities and challenges in relation to First Nations Cultural Tourism. These will need to be considered towards future development of a collaborative framework / pathway for working with First Nations Cultural Tourism businesses.

Opportunities	Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improving our relationships – the partners and First Nations cultural tourism operators</li> <li>• Aligning our strategic priorities to ensure we aren't all trying to do the same thing, or we aren't creating gaps in what is offered</li> <li>• Fostering greater cultural visibility through First Nations Cultural Tourism</li> <li>• Embedding appropriate cultural knowledge and stories in everything we do (intertwined, not separate)</li> <li>• Aligning permit requirements (NPWS, Marine, fisheries, Parks Australia etc.)</li> <li>• Aboriginal Business Advisory Initiative</li> <li>• Regional First Nations Cultural Tourism Forum</li> <li>• Including other partners (see list below)</li> <li>• Discover Aboriginal Experiences Signature Program (Tourism Australia)</li> <li>• Business Hub for First Nations businesses to share resources (bookings, marketing, business support)</li> <li>• Developing a buddy system – existing First Nations Cultural Tourism or mainstream businesses that can provide advice and support</li> <li>• University partnerships – e.g., ANU, University of Wollongong support grant writing</li> <li>• Ecotourism Australia – Respecting Our Culture (ROC) Certification</li> <li>• Building and leveraging from the Giiyong Festival and the flow on benefits</li> <li>• Aboriginal Procurement Policy (NSW) for works less than \$250,000</li> <li>• Cultural awareness training programs for partners and those working with First Nations people.</li> <li>• Future co-management of all NSW national parks</li> <li>• Sports tourism and alignment with culture (e.g., AFL, Indigenous All Stars, Welcome to Country and flow on experiences from major sporting events)</li> <li>• Leveraging from significant cultural tourism investments (e.g., Bundian Way)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access to capital and support especially for businesses ready to grow to the next level (macro)</li> <li>• Access to funding for start ups</li> <li>• Access to education and training</li> <li>• Transport and need for vehicles (for staff, for tours, for operations, to access Country)</li> <li>• Permit and application costs, tenure/access negotiations</li> <li>• Cultural IP and appropriate protocols for sharing knowledge</li> <li>• No consistent approach with how Government agencies work with First Nations people</li> <li>• Acknowledging Country with development, re-zoning processes and establishing land for communities</li> <li>• Ensuring suitable infrastructure for living, working, culture, social</li> <li>• Trying to align with Government strategic priorities and goals in funding applications (realistic needs don't always fit government priorities on the ground)</li> <li>• Cultural obligations and competing priorities</li> <li>• Overlap between Forestry, Marine, Crown, Council, Parks requirements</li> <li>• Understanding the role the Land Councils play</li> <li>• Succession planning – often small sole traders or family run businesses</li> <li>• Understanding what is tourism? What is cultural tourism? This definition may vary to meet aspirations from a 100% cultural tourism operator through to an Elder who may provide occasional and one of cultural education experiences but is not necessarily a 'tour operator.'</li> <li>• Geographic boundaries versus cultural boundaries</li> <li>• Consistent, regular, reliable and available experiences</li> <li>• Understanding what co-management of national parks means</li> <li>• Seasonality – peak holiday seasons versus non-peak seasons, impacts consistent revenue stream and employment / job opportunities</li> <li>• Marketing and promotion – limited budgets and access to promotional platforms.</li> </ul>



## 7. Next Steps

### Infographic pamphlet

Following the Roundtable, two Infographic pamphlets will be developed:

- A preliminary pamphlet describing the types of support services offered by each of the partners for First Nations Cultural Tourism operators
- A summary pamphlet of the current First Nations Cultural Tourism businesses that have been supported through DPI's First Nations Cultural Tourism Business Planning program, including future support needs to be distributed to the support partners.

### Future recommendations

The Roundtable partners identified a range of recommendations to better collaborate and support First Nations people. Recommendations include:

- Development of a Flow Chart that outlines the First Nations Cultural Tourism operator journey and what support is available at each step along the way.
- Understanding of what First Nations Cultural Tourism experiences are currently being offered, where and what support is needed. Also using this to identify gaps in offering, to support new product and business development.
- We need to look back to the past to understand the present and navigate the future. Commission a historical review of the types of programs that have been delivered previously, what worked, what didn't and how a new collaborative framework and program can be developed in the future.
- Development of a collaborative and First Nations-led framework and toolkit with shared access resources to support First Nations Cultural Tourism operators and the partners that work together with them – a culturally appropriate pathway. Ensure that we 'stay in our lanes' and when our support role is finished, we refer to the next partner.
- Ongoing review of the needs of operators (new and existing) to ensure these are best fit. Continue to identify where new programs and services need to be developed (e.g., training programs, funding, practical support in marketing and operations, financial and legal advice).

### Future recommendations continued...

- Networking events and opportunities for First Nations operators and the partners, opportunities to connect (through NATOC, LALCs, local Government?).
- Using existing and new infrastructure and events to set First Nations Cultural Tourism operators up for success
- Audit opportunities for other support services and programs – e.g., local libraries offering computer literacy, community groups and organisations. What’s being offered locally that can be local solutions for local people?
- Future co-management of all NSW National Parks – ensure an appropriate communication strategy to promote awareness and understanding of what this means for Traditional Owners, local community, tourism industry, support partners.
- Review of land planning and management schemes to develop enabling policies for First Nations people to access and use Country for economic, social and cultural gain. E.g., interim Eco Pass measures in place to enable First Nations people to trial and test tour products before making full commitment.
- Integrating cultural tourism and First Nations acknowledgement in all of our plans, strategies, priorities and programs. Visitor interpretation and visibility of culture across the South Coast (and beyond).
- Reviewing the Closing the Gap priorities and identifying how First Nations Cultural Tourism can fulfil these.
- Formation of a South Coast First Nations Cultural Tourism Committee / Group in the future for regular events, networking, collaboration, famils, First Nations Cultural Tourism Expo, Awards ceremony, regular communique (newsletter, social media group etc).
- Program development that is localised, First Nations-led, culturally appropriate ways of seeing and knowing with Indigenous Measures of Success.
- Cultural Tourism Roundtable - Aboriginal Businesses and Operators.
- Speed Networking.
- Indigenous Connections Famil.
- Awards night recognising Aboriginal Cultural Tourism in the South East.

## Appendix



## **APPENDIX A – PARTNER PRESENTATIONS**

See attachment.



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