

Introduction

Destination Southern NSW is a company limited by guarantee, governed by a constitution and funded via a Funding Agreement with Destination New South Wales. As such, the organisation is not able to comment directly on the merits of the Wallaroo Solar Farm proposal.

The purpose of this submission is to provide an overview of the value and profile of tourism in the region to inform the Independent Planning Commission's deliberations.

About Destination Southern NSW

Destination Southern New South Wales (DSNSW) is one of seven Destination Networks (DNs) in regional NSW, established by the NSW Government to improve regional stakeholder engagement and better support the visitor economy of regional NSW ¹.

DSNSW is an important conduit between the NSW Government, local government, tourism organisations and businesses. Our primary role is to coordinate tourism-related strategies and projects that promote the growth and prominence of the visitor economy across the region. We do this by delivering regional funding and industry development programs and identifying infrastructure needs and investment opportunities.

Our priorities align with the objectives, strategies, and commitments of the NSW Government and are facilitated in partnership with government agencies, tourism organisations, and operators, guided by the Southern NSW Destination Management Plan 2022-2030 (DMP) ²

The strength of Southern New South Wales lies in the diverse nature of its three sub-regions, South Coast, Snowies and Southern Tablelands, which offer different but complementary experiences. The three sub-regions are comprised of 8 local government areas: Bega Valley, Eurobodalla, Snowy Monaro, Goulburn Mulwaree, Hilltops, Queanbeyan-Palerang, Upper Lachlan and Yass Valley. Each has its respective vision for the future, and projects and priorities, which are relevant to the sustainable growth of the region.

¹ <https://www.destinationnsw.com.au/about-us/destination-networks>

² <https://dsnsw.com.au/resource/southern-nsw-destination-management-plan-2022-2030/>

The following vision and values were created from the destination management planning process findings, in consultation with regional industry stakeholders:

‘Southern New South Wales stakeholders working collaboratively to showcase and develop their sub-regions as compelling destinations and contribute to the regional NSW \$25 billion visitor expenditure target by 2030’.

This vision is underpinned by the following values:

- Ensuring a welcoming, safe, and inclusive region
- Considering responsible tourism – environmental, social, cultural, economic, and ethical
- Retaining our lifestyle, our character, and our sense of place
- Fostering a spirit of collaboration within and beyond our regional boundary
- Offering high quality, seamless experiences, and consistent customer services
- Providing opportunities for our industry to broaden and deepen their skill sets.

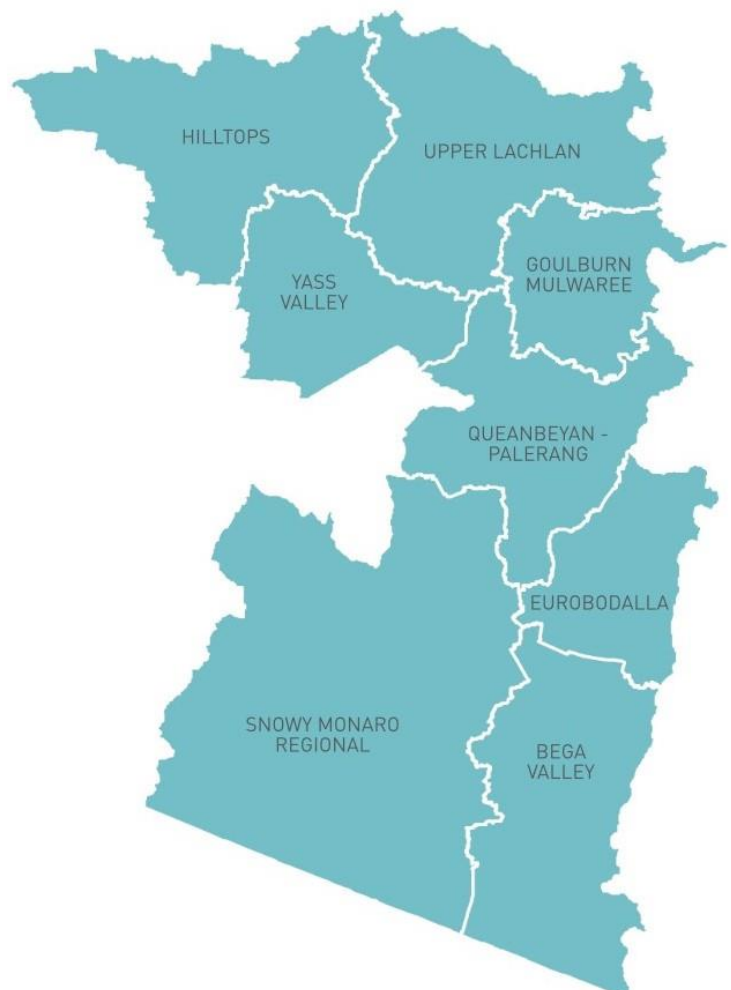


Figure 1 The Destination Southern NSW region

Profile of Tourism in the Destination Southern NSW Region

The proposed Wallaroo Solar Farm is in the Yass Valley Local Government Area. Yass Valley Council promotes the region and the range of tourism attractions on offer via its website, see <https://www.yassvalley.com.au/explore/towns/wallaroo/>.

The most granular visitor economy data available is aggregated under the Capital Country region, which includes the townships of Yass, Goulburn and Queanbeyan.

Capital Country was ranked 29th in the 50 most popular tourism regions for overnight stays in Australia at the time of the most recent Tourism Research Australia National Visitor Survey, completed in March 2024. It was ranked 20th for day trips.



Figure 2 tra-nsw-tourism-regions-2024.pdf

Year Ending March 2024	Overnight Trips (000)	Nights (000)	Expenditure (\$M)
Capital Country (29)	1,754	3,898	\$ 785

Year Ending March 2024	Day Trips (000)	Expenditure (\$M)
Capital Country (20)	2,824	\$ 358

Tourism is a major employer in the region, approximately 8.7% of the region's workforce are employed in the visitor economy.

Profile of Tourism in the ACT

VisitCanberra is the peak body responsible for promoting and developing tourism in the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) ³. The organisation recognizes the importance of key tourism assets located outside the territory border and promotes 'the Canberra region' rather than 'Canberra' in all its marketing.

It is recognized that many visitors to Canberra are attracted by its proximity to assets within the Destination Southern NSW region, including the Snowy Mountains, the Southern Tablelands and the NSW South Coast.

The Canberra region is a key tourism destination, attracting 5.5 million visitors and expenditure of \$3.8B in the year ending March 2024. Tourism represents 7.3% of the territories' gross state product.

ACT	Visitation and spend	Year ending March 2024
International	Visitors (000)	190
	Expenditure (\$M)	\$581
Domestic overnight	Visitors (000)	3,105
	Expenditure (\$M)	\$2,497
Domestic day	Visitors (000)	2,204
	Expenditure (\$M)	\$641
Total	Visitors (000)	5,499
	Expenditure (\$M)	\$3,719

³ <https://visitcanberra.com.au/>

Profile of Tourism in the Wallaroo / Hills of Hall Region

The proposed Wallaroo Solar Farm site is located in the Hills of Hall sub-region of the Canberra District GI, one of Australia's most renowned cool-climate wine regions⁴. The region has established itself as a producer of consistently high quality cool-climate wines. Clonakilla's Shiraz Viognier has been described as 'iconic'⁵ and winemaker Ken Helm receiving a Member of the Order of Australia (AM) for his contribution to the Australia wine industry⁶.

The Hills of Hall region is home to several wineries and cellar doors, including:

- Nick O'Leary Wines, Heywood <https://nickolearywines.com.au/>
- Brindabella Hills <https://www.brindabellahills.com.au/>
- Surveyors Hill <https://www.surveyorshill.com.au/>
- Pankhurst Wines <https://pankhurstwines.com.au/>
- Wallaroo Wines <https://www.wallaroolwines.com.au/>

Nick O'Leary's Heywood and Brindabella Hills rank within the top 5 tourism venues in the Canberra District wine region, in terms of visitation. Both can welcome more than 400 people through their doors on a weekend. Heywood received more than 20,000 visitors in the last 12 months. Three Wallaroo venues offer dining facilities and four cater for events including high value weddings and corporate functions. These venues operate year-round.

A winery generates income in a variety of ways. Each is dependent on a producer being able to pair a wine of appropriate quality with a memorable brand and visitor experience.

- Cellar Door Visitation – Visiting a cellar door is often the first step in a long-term customer journey. A visitor will gain a sense of place, access a multi-sensory experience, and establish a strong relationship with the brand. Cellar door visits can include a wine tasting, café or restaurant dining, and wine education. People can visit as free, independent, travelers (FIT), or as part of an informal or formal group or wine tour.
- Events - Cellar Doors make excellent venues for a variety of events, from intimate family celebrations to large corporate events and indulgent weddings. Regional winery weddings have been growing in popularity and the Hills of Hall wineries have

⁴ <https://www.wineaustralia.com/market-insights/regions-and-varieties/new-south-wales-wines/canberra-district>

⁵ <https://www.afr.com/life-and-luxury/food-and-wine/clonakilla-celebrates-the-miracle-of-its-iconic-shiraz-viognier-20230308-p5cqfx>

⁶ <https://www.winecompanion.com.au/wineries/new-south-wales/canberra-district/helm>

established themselves as popular wedding venues thanks to their high-quality infrastructure, proximity to Canberra, and stunning views.

- Wine Clubs – A wine club can generate ongoing sales for a venue long after a visitor has departed. Tourists who forge a strong affinity for a venue will join a wine club to retain access to wines they know they will enjoy, often at a reduced price. Wine club members often access additional member benefits including special releases, and access to member only events.
- Wholesale and retail distribution – A winery offering a high-quality cellar door experience can generate strong brand loyalty which will underpin strong demand via wholesale and retail distribution via bottle shops, liquor retailers, and on-premises sales in cafes and restaurants.

Bed and breakfasts

The Wallaroo region is also home to several Bed and Breakfasts, including the long-established Last Stop Ambledown Brook B&B, <https://www.laststopambledownbrook.com/>. Several wineries are evaluating the development of their own on-site accommodation offerings. This increased accommodation capacity would have the potential to further underpin the region's ability to host high value events and increase the length of stay and average spend of the region's visitors.

Cycling

Canberra is home to an enthusiastic cycling community. The Wallaroo region's proximity to Canberra, its quiet roads, and stunning scenery make it a very popular destination for the region's cyclists. The cycling community spans a broad demographic that includes many active retirees who will cycle 7 days a week.

Road trips

Drive tourism and road trips are becoming more popular as cost-of-living pressures and sustainability awareness curtail overseas and interstate travel, and tourists forgo plane travel in favour of self-drive holidays. The Wallaroo region is increasingly popular with tourists, again, due to its proximity to Canberra, its quiet country roads, and beautiful scenery.

Community Enhancement Fund

The uptake of EVs is accelerating, and the ACT is leading the way, with up to 20% of vehicles register in the ACT being an EV ⁷.

Should the project proceed, the developers may consider funding the installation of high-capacity destination chargers at key tourism assets within the region and providing free or heavily discounted power to these chargers as an element of its community enhancement and sustainability efforts.

The developers may also consider dedicating a portion of the community enhancement fund to supporting the very significant visitor economy assets operating in the region.

Conclusion

The Wallaroo region is home to many high-quality tourism assets that generate significant income for the region, provide meaningful careers, and underpin investment and community amenity.

Destination Southern NSW encourages the Independent Planning Commission to consider the organisation's vision and values in their deliberations.

'Southern New South Wales stakeholders working collaboratively to showcase and develop their sub-regions as compelling destinations and contribute to the regional NSW \$25 billion visitor expenditure target by 2030'.

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⁷ <https://electricvehiclehub.com.au/information-centre/zero-emissions-vehicle-registrations-triple-in-the-act/>

Wallaroo Solar Farm Submission to the
Independent Planning Commission



Please don't hesitate to contact me for further information.

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