



# EVENTS AND FESTIVALS

Strategic Action Plan 2024-2028





# CONTENTS

4	Executive summary
6	Events and festivals in Lake Macquarie 2019-2023
10	Snapshot of Council-led events and festivals
12	Building the night-time economy in Lake Macquarie
14	Events and festivals environment
18	Opportunities for events and festivals in Lake Macquarie
22	Key challenges for events and festivals in Lake Macquarie
26	Consultation process
28	2024-2028 Events and Festival Strategic Action Plan
34	2024-2028 Events and Festivals Strategic Action Plan Timeline
50	Delivery of the Events and Festivals Strategic Action Plan
54	Monitoring, reviewing and reporting
55	Conclusion

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

We remember and respect the Ancestors who cared for and nurtured this Country.  
*Dhumaan ngayin ngarrakalu kirraanan barayidin.*

It is in their footsteps that we travel these lands and waters.  
*Ngarrakalumba yuludaka bibayilin barayida baaduka.*

Lake Macquarie City Council acknowledges the Awabakal people and Elders past, present and future.  
*Lake Macquarie City Council dhumaan Awabakala ngarrakal yalawaa, yalawan, yalawanan.*

Wording by the Aboriginal Reference Group and translated by Miromaa Aboriginal Language and Technology Centre.

### EVENTS AND FETIVALS STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN IS ALIGNED WITH THE CITY'S:

- Lake Mac 2032: Community Strategic Plan 2022-2032
- Operational Plan 2023-2024 and Delivery Plan 2022-2026
- Destination Management Plan 2022-2026
- Arts, Heritage and Cultural Plan 2017-2027
- Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2021-2025
- Ageing Population Plan 2022-2026
- Lake Macquarie Night-Time Economy Action Plan 2019-2024

### RELATED GOALS, POLICIES AND DOCUMENTS:

- Council Policy: Local Approvals Policy
- Council Policy: Sponsorship from Council
- Council Policy: Funding from Council
- Council's Event Planning Toolkit
- Council Parks Fees and Charges

### EXTERNAL GUIDELINES, STANDARDS AND STRATEGIES:

- Economic Development Strategy 2022- 2032
- Destination Sydney Surrounds North Destination Management Plan
- Greater Newcastle Metropolitan Plan
- Sustainable Development Goals, United Nations 2015
- Hunter A2E Accelerating Events Economies Program, Hunter Joint Organisation, 2023

Cover image: 2023 Zhik Lake Mac Youth Sail NSW  
CREDIT Australian Sailing, Promocean Media

Left: Lake Mac Women in Sport Festival Try A Sport Day March 2023



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



La Traviata performance at MAP mima, October 2022

The Events and Festivals Strategic Action Plan for Lake Macquarie City Council outlines a bold and deliberate approach to supporting the region's vision for growth, development, and economic prosperity. With the understanding that events and festivals play a crucial role in fostering community identity, driving tourism, and stimulating economic activity, the plan aims to capitalise on this potential by implementing a series of targeted actions.

Key deliverables achieved under the previous strategy include establishing a targeted annual event program encompassing a diverse range of events, the coordination of major city events through a centralised calendar, and the implementation of customer-focused online communication channels. Additionally, progress has been made in event infrastructure improvements, with the addition of the Multi-Arts Pavilion (MAP), mima, and the positioning of Lake Macquarie as a co-leader within the Hunter region.

Looking ahead, the 2024-2028 Strategic Action Plan sets ambitious goals to further support the region's vision. Actions outlined in the plan focus on collaboration with the community to activate rather than simply entertain, identifying economic opportunities derived from events, developing marketing strategies, and coordinating successful events and festivals. The plan also aims to activate the night-time economy, attract major festivals, deliver unique and surprising events, and highlight the region's natural assets to drive tourism.

Key actions include:

- Facilitate events in the city as a 'producer' rather than as a 'creator'
- Improve the quality and variety of live music and performing arts events and programming
- Strengthen relationships with private event businesses and leverage the opportunities they create
- Improve data collection and understand event trends and rapid changes
- Take advantage of tour, adventure, and international tourism opportunities
- Aim for zero-waste to landfill events by 2028

In addition, the plan recognises the interconnectedness of events and festivals with broader economic and tourism development goals and strategically aligns with the Destination Management Plan 2022-2026. By aligning with the Destination Management Plan and focusing on the strategic actions outlined in the Event and Festival Strategic Action Plan, Lake Macquarie City Council aims to build a strong and diverse local economy while affirming the region's position as a premier tourist destination.



# EVENTS AND FESTIVALS IN LAKE MACQUARIE 2019-2023

Performer at Float Your Boat Festival, June 2021

The 2019 inaugural action plan was guided by the objective 'to lead and facilitate the successful and professional delivery of meaningful, creative, quality events for our community and visitors and take advantage of what makes Lake Macquarie a distinctive destination'. Over the past four years, there has been substantial progress made in the delivery of events and festivals for the city.

#### KEY ACHIEVEMENTS:

- Delivered a targeted annual event program including iconic and major events and festivals, partnered and sponsored events and festivals, community and local events
- Supported, approved or delivered a minimum of 20 signature events for the city
- Coordinated a city calendar of events
- Implemented a new and customer-focused online events communication including website, Facebook and Instagram

#### PROGRESS WAS MADE ON THE FOLLOWING KEY DELIVERABLES:

- Build on signature events as a driver for tourism and visitor economy unable to be done in any other Local Government Area (LGA)
- Define and improve event infrastructure
- Establish Lake Macquarie as a co-leader within the Hunter as one of NSW and Australia's great destinations

#### KEY DELIVERABLES NOT ACHIEVED:

- Develop and promote Lake Macquarie Corporate and Conference Prospectus – limitations experienced due to lack of suitable event infrastructure
- Host an international signature event that has wide economic benefit.

Substantial gains have been made in several areas, with 75 per cent of goals exceeded. Achievements to highlight include a 150 per cent increase in the number of theatre bookings at Warners Bay Theatre, baramayiba and Rathmines Theatre, nawayiba and the number of iconic and major events over the past four years has doubled.

Given the strong results achieved, and with the understanding these remain our key performance indicators to enable a progressive assessment of our progress, revised goals have been set for the Strategic Action Plan 2024-2028.



## Why are events and festivals important to Lake Mac?

Council recognises that events and festivals are an effective way to achieve the following outcomes:

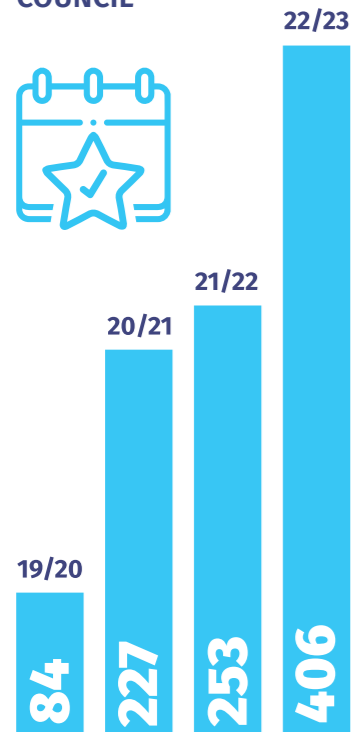
- Showcase the city and its assets
- Enhance the city's identity and shape perceptions
- Generate publicity and build awareness
- Drive visitation and generate economic benefits
- Address seasonality issues
- Enhance lifestyle

### EVENTS AND FESTIVALS BY NUMBERS 2019-2023

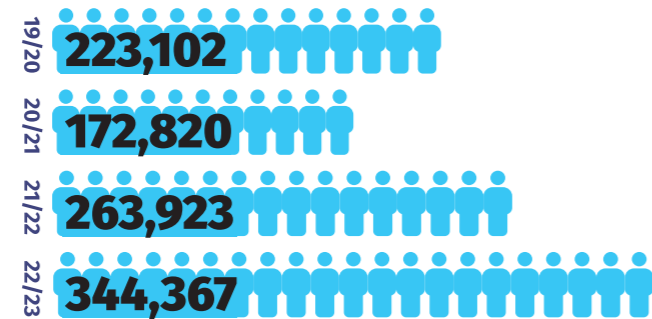
The Events and Festivals Strategic Action Plan 2024-2028 has been informed and shaped through an ongoing process of feedback and evaluation from event organisers, event attendees, Councillors and internal and external stakeholders. Since the inception of the first Events and Festivals Strategy, there has been a focus on the collation of data to better understand the performance of events and festivals that expands past simple numbers of attendees to a sophisticated, multi-faceted approach that identifies events having a greater impact economically, as a tourism driver, and socially.

There has been significant growth since the implementation of the strategy, both in the number of events held and the number of attendees. In 2022-2023, a total of 345,000 people attended 406 key events.

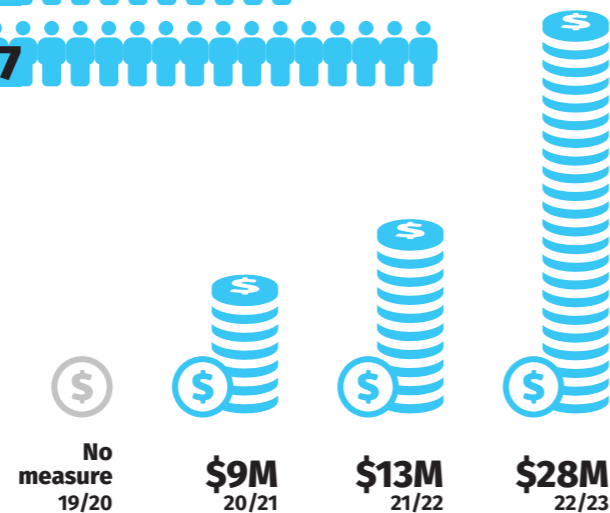
#### TOTAL EVENT APPROVALS BY COUNCIL



#### TOTAL ATTENDEES TO COUNCIL FUNDED AND LICENCED EVENTS



#### ECONOMIC IMPACT OF COUNCIL FUNDED AND LICENCED EVENTS



## 2019-2023 Strategy

	DESCRIPTION	2019 ACTUAL	2019-2023 TARGET	2023 ACTUAL	2024-2028 TARGET/YEAR
<b>NUMBER OF ICONIC EVENTS EACH YEAR</b>	Within the city – Float Your Boat, Living Smart Festival, Lake Mac Fest, Fast and Loud Festival.	6*	12	14	20
<b>NUMBER OF MAJOR EVENTS EACH YEAR</b>	Within the city–Lago Di Mac, Let's Fish, national and regional sporting competitions, Food and Wine Festivals, etc.	12*	20	24	26
<b>PERCENTAGE OF LGA POPULATION ATTENDING COUNCIL EVENTS ANNUALLY</b>	Survey question at selected events	50 per cent	70 per cent	60 per cent	70 per cent (result indicating an increase of attendees from outside the LGA)
<b>NUMBER OF COMMUNITY EVENTS FUNDED THROUGH COMMUNITY GRANTS AND SPONSORSHIP PROGRAM</b>	Within the city – and funded by the events and festival grant funding rounds, or sponsored event opportunities such as Lake Macquarie Triathlon Fernleigh 15, or the National Mountain Bike Championships.	69	80	77	100
<b>NUMBER OF CHAMBER/TOWN CENTRE EVENTS FUNDED</b>	Within the city – for example Music in the Podium	5	12	26	30
<b>INCREASE IN SOCIAL MEDIA REACH AND ENGAGEMENT AT ICONIC EVENTS</b>	Increase of 10 per cent per annum pending on event and interest	0	10%	10%	10% increase per annum in digital engagement
<b>EXTERNAL FUNDING/ SPONSORSHIP RECEIVED EACH YEAR FOR EVENTS AND FESTIVALS</b>		\$40,000	\$120,000	\$100,000	Increasing to \$200,000 by 2028
<b>INCREASE IN BOOKINGS OF WARNERS BAY AND RATHMINES THEATRES</b>		75	90	195	300
<b>ATTENDANCES TO LAKE MAC COORDINATED EVENTS AND FESTIVALS</b>		223,102	No target set	344,367	500,000
<b>LICENCES ISSUED</b>		84	100	406	450
<b>NUMBER OF LOCAL ARTISTS ENGAGED BY COUNCIL</b>		642	450	783	800 per year minimum

\*SOURCE: CREATE NSW MULTI-YEAR FUNDING KPI REPORT

\*based on existing definition of iconic and major events. It is anticipated this will change when new events occur within the city.



# SNAPSHOT OF COUNCIL-LED EVENTS AND FESTIVALS

## FOUR YEAR OVERVIEW

Over the past four years, Council has delivered 62 events (195 event days), with these events attracting an estimated 316,000 attendees. It is estimated that 78.2 per cent of attendees were local and regional residents, 15.6 per cent were day visitors from outside of the Hunter-Central Coast region, and 6.2 per cent stayed one or more nights within the region. Event attendees spent an estimated \$17.5 million in the city (average spend of \$55.29 per attendee). Council spent an estimated \$1.85 million in staging these events, equating to an average staging cost of \$5.85 per attendee. Attendees spent in the order of \$9.44 for every dollar spent on staging costs.

In 2019-2020 and 2020-2021, sport and active recreation events generated the highest revenue and had the highest returns. In 2021-2022 and 2022-2023, arts events, festivals, fairs, and sport and recreation events generated the highest returns.

2022-2023



**406**  
EVENTS APPROVED BY COUNCIL



**86.4%**  
OF ATTENDEES FROM WITHIN A 50KM RADIUS OF THE CITY



**345k**  
PEOPLE ATTENDED A COUNCIL EVENT



**780**  
COMMISSIONED ARTISTS, PERFORMERS AND MUSICIANS



**\$630k**  
OF EXTERNAL FUNDING RECEIVED FROM SIX APPLICATIONS



**5.1%**  
EVENT ATTENDEES STAYED OVERNIGHT



**\$28m**  
ECONOMIC IMPACT



**\$15.5m**  
ESTIMATED SPEND BY EVENT ATTENDEES IN LAKE MACQUARIE

2020-2021



**228**  
EVENTS WERE APPROVED. 55 WERE CANCELLED DUE TO COVID, WITH 173 HELD



**\$461k**  
OF EXTERNAL FUNDING FROM NINE GRANTS

2021-2022



**284**  
EVENTS WERE APPROVED. 61 WERE CANCELLED DUE TO COVID, WITH 223 HELD



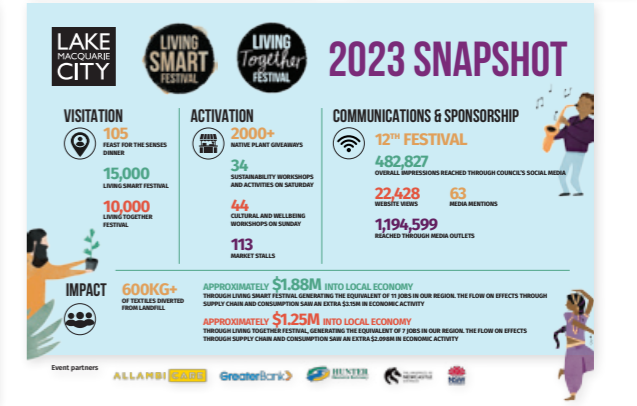
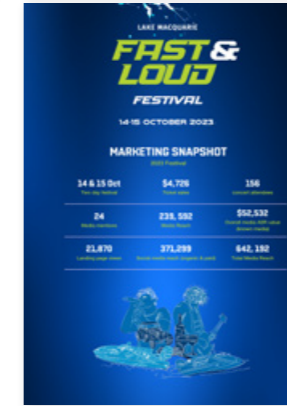
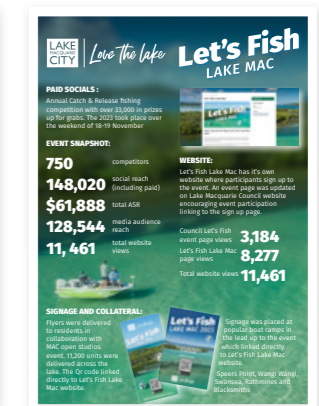
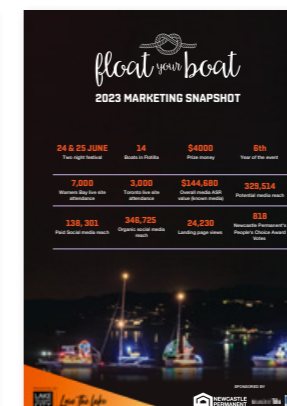
ESTIMATED ECONOMIC IMPACT  
**\$13m**



**263k**  
PEOPLE ATTENDED AN EVENT

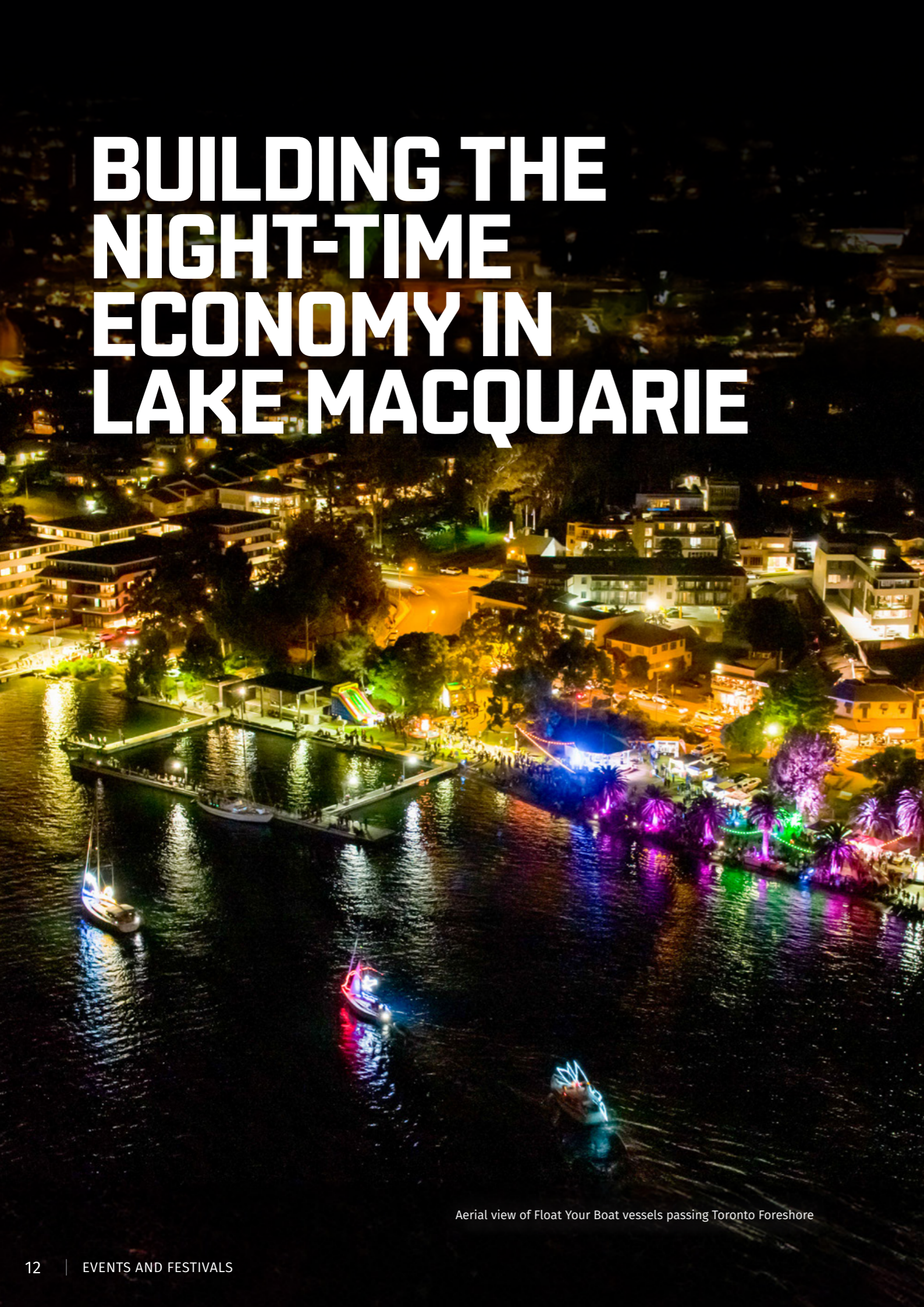


**\$440k**  
OF EXTERNAL FUNDING FROM TEN GRANTS





# BUILDING THE NIGHT-TIME ECONOMY IN LAKE MACQUARIE



Aerial view of Float Your Boat vessels passing Toronto Foreshore

In 2019, Council launched a Night-Time Economy Policy with the aim to:

- Encourage the growth of Lake Macquarie's night-time economy
- Support existing night-time economy businesses in Lake Macquarie
- Increase recreational and cultural activity outside of daytime business hours
- Support an increase in local spending, and therefore local employment
- Increase social inclusion and community safety, and reduce anti-social behaviour
- Encourage a greater diversity of night-time activities in Lake Macquarie
- Acknowledge the role the night-time economy has in activating our centres.

Over the past four years, Council expanded the offering to include evening and night-time activations and support event funding applications that roll out evening and night events. Examples include:

- Friday Night Foodies at MAP mima until dark in the summer months
- Feast for the Senses dining experience - once a year
- Float Your Boat – two nights, multiple live sites and foreshore activations, audience: 15,000 – 20,000
- Lake Mac Festival – fireworks on the lake multiple live sites and foreshore activations. Audience 15,000 – 20,000
- Fast and Loud Festival – live music concert
- Live music and performing arts annual program of performances and shows
- Funding of Music in the Podium at Warners Bay Foreshore.

Council also developed an Acoustic Management Plan for Speers Point Park, expanding the possibility and opportunity for more live music and concerts that can be managed within an event licence, such as Sip and Savour in 2023 and SummerSalt in 2024, both of which produced audiences of 5,000 plus.

Transport and parking are identified as making a significant improvement to both the night-time economy and event delivery in the city. This plan will look to address these through the following objectives:

- Investigate alternative transport options to make getting around Lake Macquarie easier for visitors and residents
- Increasing the awareness of the availability of existing car parks through sensors and smart parking initiatives.



# EVENTS AND FESTIVALS ENVIRONMENT



Aerial view showing fireworks displays across Lake Macquarie

## National trends in events and festivals

The trends listed below reflect the evolving landscape of events and festivals in Australia, driven by changing audience preferences, technological advancements, and socio-economic factors.

### SUSTAINABILITY FOCUS

There has been a growing emphasis on sustainability in events and festivals across Australia. Organisers are implementing eco-friendly practices such as reducing waste, promoting recycling, and sourcing local and sustainable materials. Attendees increasingly expect events to have minimal environmental impact, driving organisers to adopt greener practices.

### TECHNOLOGY INTEGRATION

Technology continues to play a significant role in enhancing the attendee experience at events and festivals. From cashless payment systems and mobile ticketing to interactive event apps and virtual reality experiences, organisers are leveraging technology to streamline operations, engage attendees, and provide personalised experiences.

### CULTURAL DIVERSITY

Australian events and festivals are increasingly celebrating cultural diversity and inclusivity. Organisers are showcasing a wide range of cultural traditions, cuisines, and performances, reflecting the multicultural fabric of Australian society. These events promote cross-cultural understanding and appreciation while fostering a sense of unity and belonging among attendees.

### WELLNESS AND MINDFULNESS

There has been a rise in events and festivals focused on wellness, health, and mindfulness. From yoga retreats and meditation workshops to wellness expos and outdoor fitness festivals, Australians are seeking opportunities to prioritise their physical and mental well-being. These events offer a holistic approach to health and lifestyle, catering to a growing demand for self-care experiences.

### HYBRID AND VIRTUAL EVENTS

The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the adoption of hybrid and virtual event formats in Australia. Even as in-person events returned, organisers embraced digital platforms to reach wider audiences, enhance accessibility, and provide alternative options for participation. Hybrid events combine both in-person and virtual elements, allowing attendees to engage remotely from anywhere in the world.

### REGIONAL TOURISM PROMOTION

Events and festivals are playing a vital role in promoting regional tourism across Australia. From food and wine festivals in wine regions to music festivals in coastal towns, local communities are leveraging events to attract visitors, stimulate economic growth, and showcase the unique attractions and offerings of their regions.

### MAJOR EVENT TOURING EVENTS (TOURING TOURISM)

Large festivals, blockbuster exhibitions, major music concerts, sporting competitions, and expos have become destination events for visitors and offer multi-layered experiences for audiences.



## Regional trends in events and festivals

The Events10 program through the Hunter Joint Councils coordinated an extensive events industry report to identify what was needed to position the Hunter Region as a premier destination for world-class events, growing the events sector and stimulating investment.

The Hunter Region is renowned for its vibrant music scene, hosting large outdoor concerts featuring international stars like Elton John, Sting, Rod Stewart, and Andrea Bocelli, along with popular music festivals such as A Day on the Green, and Red Hot Summer, which each draw crowds of over 10,000 people.

The region also boasts a range of local music and arts events, as well as food, wine, and music festivals held in picturesque venues like wineries, distilleries, and showgrounds. These events often focus on providing a unique, meaningful experience for attendees.

Additionally, the region's local clubs, hotels, restaurants, and commercial venues regularly host live music shows featuring both touring acts and local performers, aimed at both locals and visitors. Other regional areas, like Wollongong, leverage their natural beauty to attract tourists through events such as adventure running, cycling, and water sports. Lake Macquarie is embracing the adventure sports trend with events like the Port to Port, Max Adventure Race and GWM Mountain Bike National Championships.



80's Skaties March 2024

## Local trends in events and festivals

Lake Macquarie boasts a vibrant array of community, business, entertainment, and sporting events, showcasing the city's diverse offerings and strengths. Events and festivals in Lake Macquarie serve both visitors and residents, encouraging them to explore the city's physical, cultural and natural attractions. With an annual calendar of events and support for numerous community, sports, and entertainment gatherings, Lake Macquarie has become a hub for memorable experiences and adventures.

The city's strengths particularly shine in community and sporting events, leveraging quality venues and natural assets like beaches, lakes, and forests to host a wide range of activities. From regional sporting carnivals to outdoor adventure events encompassing surfing, sailing, cycling, and more, Lake Macquarie offers ample opportunities for active engagement and recreation.

In addition, the city is witnessing a growing calendar of creative visual and performing arts events, with modern facilities like the MAP, mima and the refurbished Warners Bay Theatre, baramayiba and Rathmines Theatre, nawayiba serving as dynamic stages for artistic expression.

Private investment is also fueling the city's event landscape with developments such as Cedar Mill and large scale event operators seeking out our venues and public spaces. This affirms the profile of the LGA as a viable location for major events and festivals is rising. The advantage of rail access further enhances the accessibility and appeal of these venues.

Despite its successes, Lake Macquarie faces a challenge in attracting larger business, entertainment, and performing arts events due to a lack of suitable venues. Addressing this gap presents an opportunity for further growth and diversification, potentially through the development or enhancement of facilities to cater to these segments, thereby enriching the city's event offerings and economic prospects.



# OPPORTUNITIES FOR EVENTS AND FESTIVALS IN LAKE MACQUARIE



National Mountain Bike Championships, March 2024

## MAJOR ENTERTAINMENT INVESTMENT IN OUR CITY

The under-construction Cedar Mill project along with other developments such as Trinity Point, demonstrate the desire for private investment in event infrastructure and facilities that will drive visitation to our city. Alongside this private investment, Council needs to drive comprehensive infrastructure upgrades and logistical solutions, to ensure that accommodation, roads, public transport, parking, and mobile phone networks have sufficient capacity to accommodate large crowds, facilitate smooth access for attendees, alleviate congestion and reduce environmental impact.

## LAKE AS THE CITY'S STAGE

Lake Macquarie is our greatest natural asset and centrepiece of our city. The lake's growing recognition as a destination for national sailing, jet skiing, and windsurfing championships underscores its appeal on a broader scale. With major events like Paddlefest, Float Your Boat, and the Fast and Loud Festival already showcasing its potential, Lake Macquarie stands as a prime location for water sports enthusiasts. By further promoting and diversifying water-based offerings, Lake Macquarie can build on its reputation as a premier aquatic destination, to attract a wider array of water-based activities and events, fostering increased tourism, community engagement, and economic growth.

In a 2023 study, the economic impact of activation on the lake if the Swansea Channel was permanently dredged was over \$141 million a year. This included salaries, boat repair, supply and maintenance activities and increased visitation for new sailing and cruising events, which will in turn increase demand for accommodation, hospitality and related services.

## EXPERIMENTATION

An exciting opportunity lies in fostering experimentation within Lake Macquarie's event landscape. Embracing new ideas and innovation in the presentation of creative concepts can set events and festivals apart as unique and compelling attractions. By leveraging strategic planning and collaborative efforts, Lake Macquarie has the potential to host an array of dynamic events, ranging from an international arts biennale to music festivals and even prestigious international sports regattas. Such initiatives not only enhance the cultural vibrancy of the region but also attract diverse audiences, driving tourism and bolstering the local economy. Through a commitment to experimentation and forward-thinking collaboration, Lake Macquarie can position itself as a dynamic hub for unforgettable experiences and groundbreaking events.

## ATTRACT 'FOOT-LOOSE' EVENTS

Continue to grow existing events and bid for 'foot loose' events that have the potential to generate significant visitation and economic benefits for Lake Macquarie. Lake Macquarie is changing, and Council can capitalise on the community's growing appetite for experimentation in the events and festival sector. We must identify, champion, highlight and truly take advantage of what makes Lake Macquarie a distinctive event destination regionally and within NSW.

## DESIRABLE LOCATION TO OBTAIN HOSTING RIGHTS FOR MAJOR EVENTS

Given our geographical location, we operate in a highly competitive environment across all types of events. We are yet to firmly establish ourselves and our unique offering in Lake Macquarie.



## SEEK OUT MAJOR SPORTS AND RECREATION EVENTS

By strategically targeting out-of-region participants and leveraging partnerships with sporting organisations, Lake Macquarie can further enhance its reputation as a premier destination for sporting events, benefiting both the local community and the broader economy. Council can capitalise on Lake Macquarie's potential as a sporting destination, particularly during low and off-peak seasons, while maximising the use of existing facilities and infrastructure by collaborating with local clubs and associations and bidding for regional, state, and potentially national and international events. The sports events program has already demonstrated success in this area, securing hosting rights for several notable events, including the 2023 Australian Surf Rowers League National Team Selection Event, National Short Course Championships, National Mixed Championships, and the 2023 NSW Beach Volleyball Tour.

## A LARGE PERFORMING ARTS, ENTERTAINMENT AND CONVENTION CENTRE

Lake Macquarie City Council does not have an indoor entertainment venue that can seat more than 500 people as either a theatre or conference venue. The city has three commercial venues that seat up to 600 people: Belmont 16s, Caves Coastal Bar & Bungalows, and Club Macquarie. Smaller venues include Mercure Charlestown, Apollo Charlestown and the Catalina Convention Centre at Rathmines. The Council manages Warners Bay Theatre, baramayiba (seats 300) and Rathmines Theatre, nawayiba (seats 200) – and is assessing the feasibility of a new hub at Morisset.

## GROWING THE NIGHT-TIME ECONOMY

By nurturing a vibrant night-time scene, characterised by diverse entertainment options, dining experiences, and cultural attractions, Lake Macquarie can distinguish itself as a dynamic destination and attract new investment and residents. Council can use events and festivals to support initiatives such as extended operating hours for businesses, cultural events, and nightlife hubs to create a safe night-time environment that stimulates economic activity, creates job opportunities, and enhances the overall liveability of the city. Areas identified with the most potential include Warners Bay, Toronto, Belmont, Wangi Wangi and Morisset.

## CAPITALISE ON INVESTMENT IN INFRASTRUCTURE FOR EVENTS AND FESTIVALS WITHIN THE LGA

There are several new developments happening around the city, proposed new hotels, the Cedar Mill project and upgrades to Hunter Sports Centre and Rafferty's Resort, alongside existing venues like Trinity Point, and Caves Coastal Bar & Bungalows, that will create a robust network of private event spaces. Council's opportunity lies in creating a holistic package of experiences for audiences, visitors, and community alike. By collaborating with local tourism providers and businesses, a package of experiences can be crafted around these private events to extend the length of stay, pre and post-the original event. Our marketing plans also need to consider the additional exposure these private event companies will provide the city.



Live Music Lake Mac, Warners Bay Theatre, baramayiba

## NEW PARTNERSHIPS

Council is in a strong position to cultivate new partnerships in events and festivals, particularly through proactive efforts in sourcing sponsorship and corporate collaborations. By reframing events as partnership opportunities, there's potential to unlock significant value by leveraging diverse audiences and aligning with commercial interests. Extending this approach beyond traditional event sponsorship to include strategic alliances presents ample opportunities for growth and innovation.

## TOUR, ADVENTURE AND INTERNATIONAL TOURISM

The time is now for the city to position itself as an attractive destination for international visitors, with an increasing number of cruise ships docking at a nearby port and the development of an international airport planned to open in 2025. The key to success here will be collaborating with tourism agencies, event organisers and local businesses to develop enticing travel packages and experiences that will further enhance the city's appeal to international visitors.

## INCLUSIVE AND DIVERSE EVENTS

Lake Macquarie aims to accelerate celebrations that embrace a broad range of identities, backgrounds, and perspectives and include individuals from various racial, ethnic, religious, and socio-economic backgrounds, as well as people with disabilities and members of the LGBTIQ+ community. In Australia, such festivals play a crucial role in fostering social cohesion, promoting understanding, and celebrating our rich diversity. These events contribute to the promotion of social inclusion and the reduction of discrimination and prejudice. By showcasing the traditions and cultures of various communities, these festivals help to break down stereotypes and foster a more inclusive society where individuals are valued for their unique contributions.



# KEY CHALLENGES FOR EVENTS AND FESTIVALS IN LAKE MACQUARIE



## EVERCHANGING EVENTS LANDSCAPE

The events and festivals landscape is ever evolving, and moving at a fast pace. Audience behaviours have moved from making advance bookings to last-minute ticket purchases and event attendance, increasing the level of risk carried by event organisers. Finding the sweet spot for return on investment for the staging cost of events is an ongoing challenge and can be seen by several high-profile music festivals cancelling or taking a hiatus.

## PERFORMING ARTS TOUR TRIANGLE

In performing arts circles, Council is a relatively new player with our three performing arts venues, Rathmines Theatres, nawayiba, Warners Bay Theatre, baramayiba and MAP mima, either recently renovated or constructed. Touring companies have established relationships with performance houses, creating a performing arts tour triangle that has made it difficult to be recognised as a possible option for touring companies.

## LEGACY EVENTS RESTRICTING GROWTH AND RELEVANCE

As can be seen through our major events calendar and 2019-2023 events and festivals performance review there is no shortage of events and festivals occurring across the lake. This achievement comes with the issue of 'making space' for new event opportunities, for us to move with audience preferences, and to align with the growth and changes of our city. Legacy events that have been delivered year on year and have set dates in our calendar, limit our ability to be agile and take advantage of new possibilities.

## DEMAND FOR GEOGRAPHIC SPREAD OF EVENTS

Given the size of Lake Macquarie, the challenge remains in the provision of easy access to events and festivals, driving the request for events to be held across the city. Events held in ill-suited locations face logistical challenges, increased costs, accessibility issues, and diminished attendee satisfaction, ultimately detracting from their overall success. Addressing this challenge requires a shift towards a more strategic approach to venue selection, prioritising factors such as accessibility, capacity, amenities, and suitability for the event's objectives.

Drift by Catapult Dance  
at MAP mima November 2021



#### RELIANCE ON VOLUNTEER ORGANISATIONS TO DELIVER EVENTS AND FESTIVALS

The reliance on volunteers to deliver many of the city's events poses a significant challenge, as the ability to grow and sustain these events is limited by the availability and capacity of volunteers. While volunteers play a vital role in supporting community initiatives, their availability and commitment may fluctuate, leading to challenges in consistently delivering high-quality events.

#### LACK OF SIGNIFICANT EVENT INFRASTRUCTURE

The absence of a large indoor venue suitable for business and entertainment events presents a significant challenge for the Lake Macquarie area. Without a major conference, function, and performing arts/entertainment centre, as well as 4-5 star hotels with quality conference facilities, the city struggles to attract and accommodate large-scale events, conferences, and conventions. Additionally, the lack of a purpose-built venue limits the types of events that can be hosted and may deter organisers from planning certain activities altogether. This gap limits the area's potential to capitalise on opportunities for economic growth, tourism, and community engagement that such events can bring.

#### RELIANCE ON OUTDOOR VENUES

The lack of a large-scale, purpose-built venue has resulted in a reliance on outdoor locations to support the delivery of major events. In many cases the outdoor venues are makeshift locations that often lack the amenities and infrastructure necessary to support large-scale events, leading to logistical difficulties, high costs and increased risk especially when weather conditions are also factored in.

#### LACK OF TRANSPORT OPTIONS

Given the expanse of the LGA and the lack of a designated central business district, access to multiple transport options is limited. A train line service exists on the west of the lake, but there is no large-scale commuter transport to the east of the lake. Reliance on the bus network, which may not provide comprehensive coverage or efficient routes, further compounds the problem. Many of our popular event hosting locations are located on main roads, that become congested during event times, requiring expensive traffic management plans to be put in place. Without effective traffic management, residents and visitors are negatively impacted and affect the continued support for events and festivals within the LGA.



Cosplay characters, including Batman and Ghostbusters, preparing for Lake Mac's Pop Bam Festival Warners Bay Theatre, baramayiba



# CONSULTATION PROCESS



Liz Ellis AO speaks at the Lake Mac  
Inspirational Women in Sport Breakfast  
at Club Macquarie, March 2024

The Events and Festivals Strategic Action Plan 2024-2028 has been informed and shaped through an ongoing process of feedback and evaluation from event organisers, event attendees, Councillors, and internal and external stakeholders. Since the inception of the first Events and Festivals Strategy, there has been a focus on the collation of data to better understand the performance of events and festivals that expands past simple numbers of attendees to a sophisticated, multi-faceted approach that identifies events having a greater impact economically, as a tourism driver, and socially.

During the development of the current action plan the following consultation occurred:

- Delivery of the Shape Lake Mac Community Engagement Survey – with over 300 respondents
- Analysis of audience feedback surveys obtained from events and performing arts initiatives
- Professional analysis of events and festivals performance, with a focus on economic outcomes including ticketing data and audience trends
- Implementation of four internal stakeholder workshops
- Discussions with external stakeholders – LGNSW Events network, Hunter Joint Organisation, professional event organisers and suppliers, and existing organisations and groups Council currently work with.

## 2024 SURVEY - WHAT DID THEY SAY?

- Respondents currently attend events and festivals because they are family-friendly, close to home, are of interest to them and are entertaining
- Respondents would like to see more markets, live music and themed festivals
- Current events and festivals were identified as enjoyable, affordable and family-friendly
- Respondents want a variety of events that target all ages, special interests and celebrate our city's diverse community
- Continue to involve and showcase local artists, community groups, businesses and sporting clubs.
- Investigate ways to continuously improve the sustainability and waste management of events and festivals
- Create events and festivals that attract people to visit the city and that support the tourism sector throughout the year
- Consider holding events and festivals at locations throughout the city as parking, lack of public transport and traffic prevents people from accessing and attending events and festivals.



# 2024-2028 EVENTS AND FESTIVAL STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN

## Vision

Our vision for events and festivals in Lake Macquarie is to create immersive and transformative experiences that inspire, connect, and celebrate what makes this city unique.

Council envisions a dynamic calendar of events that captivates audiences of all ages and backgrounds, showcasing the vibrant culture, arts and heritage of our region while fostering a sense of belonging and unity.

With creativity, innovation, and inclusivity at the forefront, we aspire to curate unforgettable moments that leave a lasting impact, drive economic prosperity and contribute to the social fabric of our society.

Aerial view of Lake Mac Carols,  
December 2022



## Aims

- Deliver events that provide economic benefit
- Seek out events that drive tourism
- Engage in sustainable event practices
- Be proactive and chase new opportunities

### DELIVER EVENTS THAT PROVIDE ECONOMIC BENEFIT

Our primary objective is to curate and execute events that serve as catalysts for economic advancement and prosperity within our community. Council acknowledge events and festivals stimulate economic activity, attract investment, and create opportunities for local businesses to thrive. By joining forces with entrepreneurs, stakeholders, and business and community organisations to support the delivery of a calendar of events, we are ultimately contributing to the growth and vitality of our economy. Through strategic partnerships and innovative programming, Council is committed to delivering impactful experiences that generate tangible economic benefits, fuel sustainable development and enhance the overall prosperity of our city.

### SEEK OUT EVENTS THAT DRIVE TOURISM

Council wants our events and festivals to stand as dynamic drivers of tourism, captivating visitors with enriching experiences that showcase the unique essence of our destination. Our events and festivals need to be designed to captivate and inspire, drawing visitors from outside the LGA to explore the cultural, natural, and recreational wonders of our region. From vibrant festivals celebrating local heritage to adrenaline-fueled sporting spectacles, our array of events needs to be diverse – both in programming and in the audiences they engage. By promoting our city as a vibrant hub of activity and excitement, Council not only attracts tourists seeking unforgettable adventures, but also enriches our community, boosts local businesses, and supports job creation within the tourism sector. With a commitment to excellence and innovation, and a focus on highlighting our natural assets from land to sea, Council strives to position our events as unforgettable experiences that leave a lasting impression on all who visit.



Living Smart Festival, December 2020





2023 Zhik Lake Mac Youth Sail NSW  
CREDIT: Australian Sailing, Promocean Media

### BE PROACTIVE AND CHASE NEW OPPORTUNITIES

For Council, being proactive and chasing new opportunities is fundamental to achieving the outcomes of this strategic action plan. By embracing a proactive approach to chasing new opportunities, event strategies can maximise growth potential, foster innovation, and position events for long-term success in a dynamic and competitive landscape.

To achieve the deliverables and continue to grow and expand our events and festivals offering, Council will need to take the lead and seek out innovative, unique, strategic partnerships, that draw on the assets located within our city. Council will do this by:

- Exploring strategic partnerships with other businesses, and organisations that complement our events strategy and target audiences
- Experimenting with new formats, technologies, or experiential elements that enhance attendee engagement and create memorable experiences. Continuously seek feedback from attendees and adapt our event strategy based on evolving trends and preferences
- Remaining agile and adaptable in response to changing market dynamics, unforeseen challenges, and shifting audience behaviour. Monitoring performance metrics, track industry trends, and being prepared to pivot our event strategy as needed to capitalise on new opportunities and mitigate risks.

### THE ROLE OF PRODUCER INSTEAD OF CREATOR

For Council, as an events producer, actively seeking out new event opportunities is essential for growth and innovation. This involves continuously scanning the landscape for emerging trends, identifying gaps in the market, and cultivating relationships with potential clients and partners. By understanding the preferences and behaviours of target audiences, producers can tailor their offerings to better meet demand and differentiate themselves in the market.

Collaborating with local businesses, organisations, and community groups will be one way to uncover new event opportunities. By tapping into existing networks and leveraging shared resources, Council can access new audiences and venues while also contributing to the vitality of the community. By staying curious, keeping an eye on trends, and actively engaging with the broader ecosystem, producers such as Council can be in the position to capitalise on emerging opportunities and drive continued growth and innovation in our city.

### ENGAGE IN SUSTAINABLE EVENT PRACTICES

We aim to achieve zero-waste to landfill by 2028 across all Arts, Culture and Tourism facilities and services.

In 2023, Council introduced a sustainable criteria to event licencing and hosted a zero-waste event for over 700 attendees. Events are a considerable contributor to landfill and a program of education, substitution, awareness and compliance will be introduced over the next four years to support event coordinators and volunteers deliver zero landfill actions.



# 2024-2028 EVENTS AND FESTIVALS STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN TIMELINE

## Key Deliverable 1: Provide an events program that raises the profile of Lake Macquarie

AHC S3, S4, S5, S6, S7

CATEGORY OF FOCUS AREAS	ACTION #	ACTION	TIMEFRAME	RESOURCES	TEAMS/LEAD
Revenue	1	Deliver over \$600,000 in funding towards a targeted annual event program including sponsorship, iconic and major	Minimum spend each year	Operational	Arts, Culture and Tourism Department, Events Team
Revenue Strategic	2	Support, approve or deliver a minimum of 20 signature events for the city	Ongoing	Operational, grants and commercial approaches	Arts, Culture and Tourism Department, Events Team
Revenue Innovation	3	Be a key and valuable partner with commercial event businesses and leverage the opportunities they create	Ongoing	Operational, grants and commercial approaches	Arts, Culture and Tourism Department, Marketing and Tourism Team, Events Team, External partners, Commercial events providers
Revenue Innovation	4	Advocate/seek grant funding opportunities to host an international signature event that has wide economic benefit	Ongoing	Operational, grants and commercial approaches	Arts, Culture and Tourism Department, Marketing and Tourism Team, Events Team, External partners
Revenue Innovation Strategic	5	Use events as an opportunity to develop tour, adventure, and international tourism opportunities	Ongoing	Operational, grants and commercial approaches	Arts, Culture and Tourism Department, Marketing and Tourism Team, External partners
Revenue	6	Continue to build the sporting events sector, working with clubs and associations to introduce festivals, coordinate events and bid for regional, state and potentially national and international events.	Ongoing	Operational, grants and commercial approaches	Arts, Culture and Tourism Department, Marketing and Tourism Team, Events Team, Community Partnerships Department, External partners
Sustainability Revenue	7	Promote Lake Macquarie and its venues and localities such as the lake, our beaches, and Awaba Mountain Bike Park (including National Parks and State Forests) to commercial event organisers and promoters, inviting them to stage events in the city	Ongoing	Operational, grants and commercial approaches	Arts, Culture and Tourism Department, Marketing and Tourism Team, Communications Team
Revenue Innovation	8	Develop and/or partner with unique and bespoke events that attract niche markets – prestige car shows, go-karts, sailing, geocaching	Ongoing	Sponsorship/partnership	Arts, Culture and Tourism Department, Marketing and Tourism Team, Events Team, External partners
Revenue Technology Strategic	9	Manage a coordinated approach to promote festivals and events in the city and the region including cross promotional marketing, and Tourism Ambassadors at major festivals	Ongoing	Operational	Arts, Culture and Tourism, Marketing and Tourism, Communications Team

Alignment with Arts Heritage and Cultural Plan 2017-2027 (AHC):

S1: Celebrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture

S2: Develop our city's visual identity

S3: Celebrate connectedness yet invest in the city's uniqueness

S4: Value and support our creative industry and cultural economy

S5: Communicate our culture: be local, aim global

S6: Actively encourage creativity and experiences

S7: Foster open communication, partnerships and leadership

S8: Continuously improve Council's cultural facilities, programs and teams

### Definitions of focus areas:

**CAPITAL:** Construction or purchase of assets that provide contemporary library programming and resources.

**COMMUNITY:** Engage and serve the local population through tailored programs, outreach and partnerships, fostering a sense of belonging and inclusivity.

**INNOVATION:** Foster a culture of continuous improvement and creativity within the library, leveraging emerging trends and technologies to enhance services and user experiences.

**MANAGEMENT:** Implement effective structures, leadership, and resource allocation to ensure efficient day-to-day operations and strategic alignment with overarching goals. Includes staff training and continued improvement.

**REVENUE:** Projects and Programs that raise revenue.

**STRATEGIC:** Establish strong future-focused goals aligned with Council's vision. Including sector leadership, change management and agile thinking.

**SUSTAINABILITY:** Develop and maintain practices that ensure Lake Mac Libraries' long-term viability, including financial stability, environmentally conscious initiatives, and strong community relationships.

**TECHNOLOGY:** Integrate and optimise digital tools, platforms and resources to streamline operations, improve accessibility and meet the evolving information needs of the community.

### Glossary of resources:

**COMMERCIAL APPROACHES:** Collaborating on and with commercial enterprises.

**EXTERNAL FUNDING:** Grants and commercial sponsorship.

**GRANTS:** Funding from external sources.

**OPERATIONAL:** Included from within existing budget.

**SPONSORSHIP/PARTNERSHIP:** Business support and funding.



## Key Deliverable 2: Integrate and support Council's city identity strategy and positioning

AHC S1, S2, S3, S4, S5, S6, S7

CATEGORY OF FOCUS AREAS	ACTION #	ACTION	TIMEFRAME	RESOURCES	TEAMS/LEAD
Revenue Technology	10	Identify opportunities for social media coverage at major events and media announcements as well as targeting the tourism sector	Ongoing	Operational	Arts, Culture and Tourism Department, Marketing and Tourism Team, Communications Team
Revenue Technology	11	Investigate and support branding opportunities with existing and new iconic and signature events	Ongoing	Operational	Arts, Culture and Tourism Department, Marketing and Tourism Team, Communications Team
Revenue	12	Develop an annual program of Lake Macquarie events that supports the city as a home for excitement and adventure sports	Ongoing through annual program	Operational, grants and commercial approaches	Arts, Culture and Tourism Department, Marketing and Tourism, Events Team, Performing Arts Team
Revenue	13	Continue to liaise with national event coordinators to facilitate national touring events for the city	Ongoing	Operational	Arts, Culture and Tourism Department, Marketing and Tourism Team, Events Team, Performing Arts Team, External partners
Revenue	14	Continue to position our outdoor venues such as Speers Point Park and Morisset Showgrounds as major event sites	Ongoing	Operational	Arts, Culture and Tourism Department, Marketing and Tourism, Events Team, Performing Arts Team, External partners
Revenue	15	Maintain Lake Macquarie's position as a co-leader within the Hunter as one of NSW's and Australia's great destinations	Ongoing	Operational	Arts, Culture and Tourism Department, Marketing and Tourism Team, Communications Team

## Key Deliverable 3: Position Lake Macquarie as creative, innovative and cosmopolitan

AHC S2, S4, S5, S6, S7, S8

CATEGORY OF FOCUS AREAS	ACTION #	ACTION	TIMEFRAME	RESOURCES	TEAMS/LEAD
Innovation Sustainability	16	Include opportunities for local artists to be involved with Council events	Ongoing through annual program	Operational, grants	Arts, Culture and Tourism Department, Marketing and Tourism Team, Events Team, Performing Arts Team, Community Partnerships Department, External partners
Innovation Technology Revenue	17	Advocate/seek grant funding opportunities to develop a large-scale cultural arts festival that attracts national attention	Within 2 years	Operational, grants and commercial approaches	Arts, Culture and Tourism Department, Special Projects Team, Marketing and Tourism Team, Performing Arts Team, External partners
Innovation Technology Revenue Management Sustainability	18	Support and nurture an environment that encourages creativity and innovation	Ongoing	Operational, grants and commercial approaches	Arts, Culture and Tourism Department, Marketing and Tourism Team, Events Team, Performing Arts Team, Community Partnerships Department, External partners
Innovation Revenue Sustainability	19	Incorporate an artist in residency program as part of Living Smart Festival, Float Your Boat and other Council events	Annual program	Operational	Arts, Culture and Tourism Department, Marketing Team, Special Projects Team, Performing Arts Team



**Key Deliverable 4:**  
**Improve the quality and variety of live music and performing arts events and programming**

AHC S1, S4, S5, S6, S7, S8

CATEGORY OF FOCUS AREAS	ACTION #	ACTION			TIMEFRAME	RESOURCES	TEAMS/LEAD
Revenue	20	Provide a performing arts and live music program and engage musicians and performing arts professionals to deliver			Annual program	Operational, grants	Arts, Culture and Tourism Department, Events Team, Performing Arts Team
Innovation Technology Revenue	21	Provide opportunities to connect with and enjoy local, national and international artists, through a program of exhibitions, creative workshops and artistic programs			Annual program	Operational, grants	Arts, Culture and Tourism Department, Events Team, Performing Arts Team, Special Projects Team, Lifelong Learning Team
Innovation	22	Actively promote First Nations music, writers and dancers within the performing arts program			Annual program	Operational, grants	Arts, Culture and Tourism Department, Events Team, Performing Arts Team
Innovation	23	Support First Nations groups and organisations to provide programs or activities that promote cultural identity			Annual program	Operational, grants	Arts, Culture and Tourism Department, Events Team, Performing Arts Team, Special Projects Team, Lifelong Learning Team, Community Partnerships Department
Innovation Revenue Strategic	24	Maintain existing and instigate new partnerships with external regional and national cultural organisations			Ongoing Within 12 months establish two new partnerships	Operational, grants	Performing Arts Team, Special Projects Team
Innovation Revenue	25	Continue to foster the local performing arts community through initiatives like the One Act Play Festival			Yearly event 2024-2028	Operational, grants	Performing Arts Team
Innovation Revenue	26	Further develop live music programming for our venues			Annual program of min. four a year	Operational, grants and commercial approaches	Performing Arts Team, Events Team



**Key Deliverable 5:**  
**Increase employment and economic growth in the sector through the development of the night-time economy**

AHC S2, S3, S4, S5, S6, S7, S8

CATEGORY OF FOCUS AREAS	ACTION #	ACTION			TIMEFRAME	RESOURCES	TEAMS/LEAD
Revenue	27	Partner and facilitate a range of events that encourage evening and night-time activation			Ongoing	Operational, grants and commercial approaches	Arts, Culture and Tourism Department, Marketing and Tourism Team, Events Team, Performing Arts Team, External partners
Revenue Sustainability	28	Include a night-time element in iconic festivals for example, Float Your Boat and Fast and Loud Festival			Yearly program 2024 -2028	Operational, grants	Events Team
Revenue Sustainability	29	Encourage applications through the events and festivals funding rounds for night-time events			Yearly program, two rounds per year 2024-2028	Operational	Arts, Culture and Tourism Department, Events Team
Innovation Technology Revenue Management Sustainability	30	Use spaces in different and unique ways. Support experimentation with open spaces, foreshore parks, shared pathways, beaches and town centres as sites for evening events			Ongoing	Operational, grants and commercial approaches	External stakeholders, Community Partnerships Department, Arts, Culture and Tourism Department, Events Team
Revenue	31	Investigate alternative transport options to make getting around the city easier for visitors and residents			Within 12 months and provide report for action	Operational, grants	Night-time economy working group
Revenue	32	Increase awareness about the availability of existing car parks through sensors and smart parking initiatives			Within 12 months and provide report for action	Operational, grants	Night-time economy working group



## Key Deliverable 6: Foster innovative and contemporary events and festivals

AHC S3, S5, S6, S7, S8

CATEGORY OF FOCUS AREAS	ACTION #	ACTION	TIMEFRAME	RESOURCES	TEAMS/LEAD
Innovation Revenue Management	33	Facilitate events in the city as a 'producer' rather than as a 'creator'. Council sees its role as producer, approver, in-kind and financial supporter	Within 12 months	Operational	Arts, Culture and Tourism Department, Events Team
Innovation Technology Revenue Management Sustainability	34	Actively pursue and develop a nationally significant suite of strategic icon and signature events and festivals for the city. Major events and festivals that are readily identifiable with Lake Macquarie that receive national and international recognition and have impacts beyond the boundaries of the city		Operational, grants and commercial approaches	Arts, Culture and Tourism Department, Marketing and Tourism Team, Events Team, Performing Arts Team, Special Projects Team, External partners, Commercial event providers
Revenue	35	Ensure we continue to adapt to audience demand and have the flexibility to change offerings	Ongoing	Operational	Arts, Culture and Tourism Department, Marketing and Tourism Team, Events Team, Performing Arts Team, Community Partnerships Department, External partners
Management Technology	36	Improve data collection and understanding event trends and rapid changes	Within 12 months with ongoing review	Operational	Arts, Culture and Tourism Department, Marketing and Tourism Team
Innovation Management Sustainability	37	Review existing team structure and align positions and skills with strategy. Review staff capabilities and plan a comprehensive development program to build the capabilities needed to achieve the outcomes envisaged in this plan	Within 12 months	Operational	Arts, Culture and Tourism Department, Events Team
Management	38	Streamline compliance and regulations and review all current event and community licencing procedure, development application, focusing on making the process easier and faster	Within 12 months and regular yearly review	Operational	Events Team, Performing Arts Team, Development Assessment and Certification Department
Management	39	Revise existing policies, funding programs and procedures aligned with this plan	Within 12 months and regular yearly review	Operational	Arts, Culture and Tourism Department, Marketing and Tourism, Communications Team, Events Team, Performing Arts Team



## Key Deliverable 7: Invest in quality infrastructure that meets community and economic aspirations

AHC S4, S5, S7, S8

CATEGORY OF FOCUS AREAS	ACTION #	ACTION	TIMEFRAME	RESOURCES	TEAMS/LEAD
Innovation Technology Economic Management Sustainability	40	Continue to work on the feasibility for a new performing arts centre and conference facility	Ongoing	Operational, grants	Arts, Culture and Tourism Department, Performing Arts Team
Innovation Economic Management	41	Work with commercial event providers to strengthen the sector and assist in facilitating growth – including Cedar Mill, Hunter Sports Centre, Trinity Resort and other event industry operators	Within 12 months	Operational	Arts, Culture and Tourism Department, Asset Management Department, Commercial event providers
Economic Management	42	Complete an audit of entertainment venues in the city and improve understanding of economic impact	Within 2 years	Operational, grants	Arts, Culture and Tourism Department, Integrated Planning Department, DANTIA
Economic Management	43	Advocate to include event infrastructure within all recreational parks including new capital and redevelopment works	Ongoing	Operational, grants and commercial approaches	Asset management Department, City Projects Department, Community Partnerships Department

## Key Deliverable 8: Ensure our events are fiscally responsible

AHC S7, S8

CATEGORY OF FOCUS AREAS	ACTION #	ACTION	TIMEFRAME	RESOURCES	TEAMS/LEAD
Revenue Management	44	Actively seek funding sources – grant and sponsorship for major and significant events	Ongoing	External funding	Arts, Culture and Tourism Department, Marketing and Tourism Team, Events Team, Performing Arts Team, Special Projects Team
Revenue Management	45	Develop strategic funding, programming, and professional development partnerships with organisations	Ongoing	Operational	Arts, Culture and Tourism Department, Marketing and Tourism Team, Events Team, Performing Arts Team, Special Projects Team
Management	46	Develop a sponsorship prospectus for Council events	Within 12 months	Operational	Communications Team, Arts, Culture & Tourism Department, Marketing and Tourism Team



**Key Deliverable 9:  
Achieve national event and festival professional standards in  
governance, operational responsibility, and integrity**

AHC S6, S7, S8

CATEGORY OF FOCUS AREAS	ACTION #	ACTION	TIMEFRAME	RESOURCES	TEAMS/LEAD
Innovation Technology Revenue Management Sustainability	47	Commit to zero-waste to landfill Council managed events within the city through best practice, education and investment		Operational	Arts, Culture and Tourism Department, Marketing and Tourism Team, Events Team, Performing Arts Team, Community Partnerships Department, Special Projects Team
Sustainability	48	Embrace sustainable and environmentally responsible practices, such as UN Sustainable Development Standard Actions, into our planning and programming of events and festivals	Percentage increase each year for 100 per cent compliance 2028	Operational	Arts, Culture and Tourism Department, Marketing and Tourism Team, Events Team, Performing Arts Team, Community Partnerships Department, Special Projects Team
Sustainability Strategic	49	Aim for zero-waste to landfill events for all licenced events in the city by 2028	2028	Operational	Arts, Culture & Tourism Department, Marketing and Tourism Team, Events Team, Performing Arts Team, Community Partnerships Department, External partners
Economic Management Sustainability	50	Actively seek sustainable funding partners and sources for project and program delivery	Ongoing	Operational	Arts, Culture & Tourism Department, Marketing and Tourism team, Events Team, Performing Arts Team, Community Partnerships Department, Special Projects Team
Management Sustainability	51	Continuously review service delivery for excellence, efficiency, cost management, sustainability, programming and resource use	Ongoing	Operational	Arts, Culture and Tourism Department, Events Tea
Revenue Management Sustainability	52	Review best practice and value for money from supported and sponsored events	Ongoing	Operational	Arts, Culture and Tourism Department, Marketing and Tourism Team
Management	53	Ensure openness and continuous improvement through an open grant program, annual expressions of interest for the delivery of events	Ongoing	Operational	Arts, Culture and Tourism Department, Events Team, Performing Arts Team, Special Projects Team
Management	54	Complete monthly, quarterly and annual reporting against KPIs and industry benchmarking	Ongoing	Operational	Arts, Culture and Tourism Department



## Key Deliverable 10: Build capacity in events and festival sector

AHC S1, S4, S6, S7

CATEGORY OF FOCUS AREAS	ACTION #	ACTION	TIMEFRAME	RESOURCES	TEAMS/LEAD
Innovation Revenue Management	55	Support events that employ artists, contractors, artistic directors, food vendors and logistic support	Ongoing	Operational	Arts, Culture and Tourism Department, Marketing and Tourism Team, Events Team, Performing Arts Team, Special Projects Team
Technology Management	56	Develop a communication database with other event organisers, stakeholders and operators, performers, stallholders and musicians	Maintain current database with ongoing review and additions	Operational	Arts, Culture and Tourism Department, Marketing and Tourism Team, Events Team, Performing Arts Team, Special Projects Team
Management	57	Investigate the creation of a formal network of professional events businesses and organisations.	Within two years	Operational	Arts, Culture and Tourism Department, Events Team
Management	58	Continue to improve compliance licence provision and skill development of event organisers through workshops, tool kits and training	Commence within six months, yearly program	Operational	Arts, Culture and Tourism Department, Events Team
Innovation Management Sustainability	59	Develop an events ready information and education program for local businesses	Commence within 6-12 months, yearly program	Operational	Arts, Culture and Tourism Department, Events Team
Management	60	Continue to be an active partner with Hunter Joint Organisation (HJO) events members and with neighbouring LGAs	Ongoing	Operational	Arts, Culture and Tourism Department, Marketing and Tourism Team, HJO Hunter Events Network

## Key Deliverable 11: Deliver events that are inclusive and accessible

AHC S1, S3, S6, S7, S8

CATEGORY OF FOCUS AREAS	ACTION #	ACTION	TIMEFRAME	RESOURCES	TEAMS/LEAD
Community	61	All events to commence with a welcome or acknowledgment to country	Ongoing	Operational	All, Arts, Culture and Tourism Department, Community Partnerships Department, External partners
Community	62	Implement cultural awareness training for events staff and community groups	Within 12 months	Operational	Arts, Culture and Tourism Department, Community Partnerships Department
Community	63	Engage culturally and linguistically diverse artists and businesses to participate in new and existing community and Council-hosted events	Annual program	Operational, Grants	Arts, Culture and Tourism Department, Community Partnerships Department, External partners
Community Strategic	64	Ensure consideration for accessibility and inclusion are part of the event planning process. Use the NSW Government accessible events toolkit	Ongoing	Operational	Arts, Culture and Tourism Department, Community Partnerships Department, External partners
Community Strategic	65	Draw on community and neighbourhood events to sustain an annual calendar of events	Annual program	Operational, grants	Arts, Culture and Tourism Department, Community Partnerships Department, External partners
Community Strategic	66	Proactively support, develop and host events for multi-cultural communities	Ongoing Minimum two per year	Operational	Community Partnerships Department, External partners
Community	67	Proactively support, develop and host events for people identified as vulnerable – people with a disability or who are isolated.	Ongoing Minimum one event per year	Operational	Community Partnerships Department, External partners



# DELIVERY OF THE EVENTS AND FESTIVALS STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN

A woman in a black leotard is performing aerial silks on a tall metal structure. She is suspended in the air, holding onto the silks with her hands and feet. The structure is made of white metal poles and ropes. The background shows a clear blue sky and some green trees.

Lake Mac Women in Sport Festival Try A Sport Day March 2023

To effectively deliver on this strategy, several key elements must be prioritised:

## **FLEXIBILITY AND AGILITY**

Staying agile and responsive to changing audience needs and preferences will be vital to the success of this strategy. Actions include:

- Establish systems both to collect audience information to continuously monitor feedback, analyse data, and adapt event strategies accordingly. Having this understanding can inform the types and kinds of events that will create engaging experiences that resonate with attendees and drive successful events
- Embrace flexibility in event planning and execution to adapt to changing circumstances, unforeseen challenges, and evolving audience preferences
- Encourage creativity and innovation in event design, programming, and marketing to create unique and engaging experiences that resonate with audiences and differentiate Lake Macquarie's events from competitors
- Develop a process to systematically review Council's events calendar:
  - Maintain and review existing events and festivals to keep them relevant
  - Identify the events and festivals to expand and grow
  - Make space to be open to new opportunities.

By maintaining a focus on innovation, audience engagement, and community collaboration, Lake Macquarie can ensure existing events like Lake Mac Carols and the Living Smart Festival remain vibrant, relevant, and beloved fixtures on the city's cultural calendar, while growing events like Float Your Boat and Fast and Loud, and seizing new opportunities for innovative, contemporary events and festivals that have impact.

## **MIXED MODE OF EVENT MANAGEMENT**

As a key driver within the events and festival sector of the city, it is essential that the Lake Macquarie City Council events team actively seeks, advocates, facilitates and supports the provision of a variety of successful events and festivals across the city to achieve strategic, economic, social, and creative outcomes.

The team will need to adopt many roles, from producer right through to partner and facilitator.

To achieve this, the approach will include outsourcing, whole or part, of event delivery to qualified external parties. Council will invest in staff training and development to equip them with the necessary skills, knowledge, and resources to effectively manage and deliver successful events.

This approach also draws upon the existing events and festivals funding program that sees the responsibility of event organisation shared across multiple stakeholders, both professional and community event organisers.



## FINANCIAL INVESTMENT

The actions and strategies focus on realigning Council's priorities using the existing capacity of staff and partners. Actions and strategies that are unsuccessful in obtaining resources from external grants and other revenue streams will be reviewed using Council's normal planning and reporting processes, and alternative actions will be developed.

The events program includes a proactive approach to securing funding through public-private partnerships, sponsorships, grants, or other revenue streams to support fiscally sustainable event initiatives and infrastructure development.

## INVESTMENT IN EVENT INFRASTRUCTURE

The actions outlined within the plan provide opportunities and identify event infrastructure as a limitation in growing the sector. Where funds are required to implement asset upgrade, construction or replacement, these funds will be sourced from grants, or requested through Council's normal budgetary processes.

Actions that do have infrastructure implications will be developed through extensive consultation including undertaking feasibility studies, cost-benefit analysis, impact studies, and include a comprehensive resourcing and post-construction operational framework.

## INVESTMENT IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF COMMUNITY EVENT ORGANISERS

Continued investment in the skill development of our community volunteer event organisers by providing training and resources tailored to the specific needs of volunteer organisers, the city can empower them to plan, execute, and manage events more efficiently and professionally.

## A COMMITMENT TO CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Actively engaging in a process of continuous improvement will identify opportunities for optimisation, innovation, and best practice adoption to enhance the overall quality and efficiency of the event licencing system.

Council can further strengthen its approach to event licences by undertaking regular review and streamlining the event licence approval process and clear guidelines and timelines are communicated to applicants, allowing for smoother coordination and timely decision-making.

As well as fostering regular engagement with stakeholders involved in the event licencing process, including event organisers, venue owners, local businesses, community groups, and regulatory agencies.

## INTERAGENCY COORDINATION AND COLLABORATION

Continued liaison with key external stakeholders such as NSW Police, Transport for NSW, NSW Health and internal development and compliance, rangers, traffic and vegetation teams. Enhance coordination and collaboration between relevant agencies and departments involved in event planning and licencing. Facilitate regular meetings or working groups to discuss upcoming events, share information, and coordinate efforts to address potential issues or conflicts.

## BENCHMARKING BEST PRACTICE IN EVENTS AND FESTIVALS DELIVERY

Benchmarking will allow Council to identify areas for improvement, learn from successful strategies and adopt innovative approaches to enhance the quality and impact of our events. By maintaining a broad environmental awareness Council will enhance efficiency and effectiveness, ensure quality assurance, foster innovation and creativity, mitigate risks, and maintain a competitive advantage in the dynamic events industry.



Fast and Loud Festival, May 2022



# MONITORING REVIEWING AND REPORTING

Staff will report on the actions of the plan as part of the key performance indicators in monthly reports and through Council's quarterly Operational Plan reports.

Council will report on the Events and Festivals Strategic Action Plan elements as part of its Annual Report.

The Events and Festivals Strategic Action Plan will be reviewed and updated in 2028.



# CONCLUSION

The Events and Festivals Strategic Action Plan acknowledges the pivotal role that events and festivals play, not only as drivers of economic prosperity and tourism but also as essential components for fostering community identity, connection, education, and engagement.

By embracing this Strategic Action Plan, Lake Macquarie is poised to unlock new opportunities for enhancing the vibrancy and cultural richness of our city. Through strategic planning, collaboration, and innovation, our city can harness the power of events and festivals to create memorable experiences, attract visitors, and strengthen community bonds.

As Lake Macquarie continues to evolve and grow, this plan serves as a guiding framework for leveraging the transformative potential of events and festivals. By prioritising inclusivity, sustainability, and creativity, the city can ensure that events and festivals remain integral to its identity and prosperity for years to come.



## **EVENTS AND FESTIVALS STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN 2024-2028**



(02) 4921 0333



[lakemac.com.au](http://lakemac.com.au)



[council@lakemac.nsw.gov.au](mailto:council@lakemac.nsw.gov.au)



[facebook.com/lakemaccity](https://facebook.com/lakemaccity)



[twitter.com/lakemac](https://twitter.com/lakemac)



[instagram.com/ourlakemac](https://instagram.com/ourlakemac)

Prepared by Lake Macquarie City Council

126-138 Main Road Speers Point NSW 2284

Box 1906 Hunter Region Mail Centre NSW 2310

© Lake Macquarie City Council 2024