NSW TOURISM AWARDS

Pride ✦ Strength ✦ Community ✦ Passion

Meet Our 2026 Judges

NSW TOURISM ASSOCIATION
THE VOICE FOR THE VISITOR ECONOMY



Ron Beeldman

CHAIR OF JUDGES

2026

Ron Beeldman serves as Chair of Judges, bringing more than 50 years of successful and rewarding experience in the education, co-ordination, supervision, and marketing of diverse programs in the travel, hospitality, and special events sectors. His career highlights include significant involvement in the development and administration of the inaugural Regional and New South Wales Tourism Awards in the 1990s, helping to establish a legacy of celebrating excellence across the state.

Throughout his career, Ron has held senior leadership, training, and advisory roles, shaping industry standards and inspiring those entering the sector. His work has been marked by a commitment to quality, innovation, and professionalism, ensuring tourism continues to be a strong contributor to both economic growth and community vitality. As Chair of Judges, Ron applies his deep knowledge, fair judgement, and passion for the industry to uphold the highest standards of integrity, ensuring that every award recognises truly outstanding achievement.

Our judges bring decades of experience across tourism, hospitality, business, and marketing. Experts in destination marketing, business development, hospitality management, grant writing, and sustainable tourism, they combine regional and international industry knowledge. From award-winning entrepreneurs to seasoned professionals, their diverse expertise ensures a fair, insightful judging process. United by a passion for excellence, they are dedicated to recognising the very best in NSW tourism.

MEET THE JUDGES



Margaret Shannon

VICE CHAIR OF JUDGES

Margaret is a dedicated and experienced professional with a proven track record in tourism management and business development, and demonstrated success in operational management, strategic planning and marketing.

Margaret brings over 20 years' experience in the hotel, cruise and caravan industry and is a director on the National Caravan and Camping Industry Association and Destination North Coast boards. In 2022 she was named Myall Lakes Woman of the Year in recognition of contribution to regional tourism.

As Vice Chair of Judges, Margaret stepped back from the judging process to ensure appropriate separation and ensure no conflict of interest, while continuing to contribute to other awards programs where no conflict arose.

Ian Wood

BOARD - NSW TOURISM ASSOCIATION

Strategic, hands-on and people-driven leader with 25+ years' experience driving operational excellence, guest experience innovation, and transformational growth across the tourism, entertainment, and visitor attraction sectors.

Respected for a collaborative leadership style, commercial acumen, and a laser-focus on performance, engagement, and customer experience. Adept at influencing stakeholders, managing change, and aligning cross-functional teams across global organisations. Passionate about building inclusive, empowered cultures and delivering memorable guest experiences.





Lisa Campbell

INTERNAL AUDIT - AWARDS ADVISOR

With nearly 25 years of experience as a judge for tourism awards, including the ACT, NSW and Australian Tourism Awards, Lisa has also served as Chair, Auditor, and Awards Advisor for the NSW Tourism Awards.

Over a 35-year career across Australia and Europe, she has contributed to a broad range of sectors within the tourism industry. Her expertise now extends to training and development across government, academic, and private organisations. Lisa currently holds an operations role with a national company, specialising in training delivery and support.

Ashley Gray

Ashley has a background in brand marketing and content creation, shaped by her work with global brands such as Red Bull, where she specialised in storytelling, partnerships, and creative campaigns.

Now with Destination North Coast, and previously in local government, she focuses on industry engagement, capacity building and visitor economy development. Ashley plays a key role in delivering the North Coast Destination Management Plan 2022–2030, supporting initiatives that showcase the region's strengths and values. Passionate about collaboration, she works closely with tourism operators to create unique, place-based experiences that enrich visitor journeys while delivering positive outcomes for local communities.





Barbara Magee

Barbara Magee is an experienced communications and marketing professional. Having worked in government and tourism, predominantly in the western Sydney region, she has contributed to the growth of the visitor economy through managing major events, implementing branding and undertaking community engagement.

She has a passion for travelling.



Bettina Kramer

Bettina Kramer is an endless traveller and experienced tourism professional. As marketing manager for bespoke luxury inbound specialist, Southern Crossings, she brings extensive experience in international luxury travel marketing and creative product development. Bettina's career has also included senior destination marketing roles with Destination NSW, including Regional Director for Europe, alongside extensive mentoring experience as a tourism marketing and product development consultant. With a deep understanding of the visitor economy, Bettina is passionate about championing the people, products and experiences that make NSW an inspiring, distinctive and rewarding destination for visitors.



Candice Pether

Candice Pether is a highly respected hospitality professional with more than 30 years' experience across hotel operations, sales, revenue management and leadership. As General Manager of Encore by Mingara on the NSW Central Coast, she is passionate about delivering exceptional guest experiences while driving commercial success and fostering high-performing teams. Candice has proudly served as a judge for tourism awards for the past four years, bringing extensive industry knowledge, operational expertise and a genuine appreciation for excellence in tourism. She is committed to recognising innovation, outstanding customer service and businesses that make a positive contribution to the visitor economy and the Australian tourism industry.

Carolyn Childs

Carolyn Childs, CEO, Strategist, Futurist, MyTravelResearch.com

Carolyn Childs co-founded MyTravelResearch.com to help visitor economy organisations prepare for the future. Her career spans 38 years and 35+ countries including with IATA, Travel Research Centre and the Australian travel vertical at Kantar.

She is a top-rated speaker and author on tourism, creating a trends database and future planning tool deployed around the world. A past President of Travel and Tourism Research Association Asia-Pacific Chapter, Certified Member of the Market Research Society, Advisory Panel member for WTACH and Ambassador for Australian Regional Tourism, she sat on the UNWTO Panel of World Tourism experts.





Christine Tapara

With a lifelong connection to the ocean, Christine brings over 16 years of experience in account management, program management, and operations, along with a unique background that includes working in her family-run surf academy.

Passionate about "all things ocean," her operations background spans both Take 3 For The Sea, an environmental not-for-profit, and her current role at SurfAid International, a humanitarian organisation supporting remote coastal Indonesian communities where surfers like to travel. Christine is dedicated to supporting the empowerment of individuals and communities worldwide and beyond to create positive, lasting change through behaviour-driven action that protects people and planet alike.



Daniel Page

Dan Page brings a distinctive blend of global hospitality experience, commercial leadership and regional business insight to the NSW Tourism Awards judging panel. Before building his banking career, Dan worked across international hospitality environments, developing a deep appreciation for exceptional customer experiences, operational excellence and the role tourism plays in thriving communities.

Today, he is Regional Manager, Commercial Banking with Commonwealth Bank, leading a team supporting businesses across Central Greater West NSW. Based in Dubbo, Dan is passionate about regional growth, leadership and helping businesses realise their potential, bringing both a customer-focused and commercially grounded perspective to the judging process.

David Quinn

I am a commercial leader specialising in sales, partnerships, business development and stakeholder management, with a strong track record of driving growth and delivering results. Since 2017, I have been with Laissez-Faire Catering, progressing from Head of Sales to Director of Business Development, leading revenue growth, strategic partnerships and business expansion.

My passion for hospitality and events began at 16, and I bring more than 20 years' experience across Sydney's hospitality, events, sales, IT, government and real estate sectors. I am recognized for my integrity, strategic thinking, collaboration and negotiation skills, and remain passionate about supporting and growing Australia's tourism and events industry.





Emilie Howe

Emilie Howe is a tourism leader with extensive experience across workforce development, industry engagement and regional visitor economies. Originally from Tasmania and now based in Sydney, she is General Manager of eeger, an online platform connecting people with careers, training and industry information across Tourism, Hospitality, and Travel.

Previously, as inaugural CEO of Visitor Experience Training (VXT), Emilie led statewide training initiatives and built strong industry partnerships across Tasmania. A passionate regional traveller, she has judged the Tasmanian Tourism Awards (2021–2023), NSW Tourism Awards (2024-2025), and NSW Top Tourism Town Awards (2025).



Eric Sward

A results - orientated Tourism Industry professional with a deep knowledge of hotel, motel, apartment and resort management.

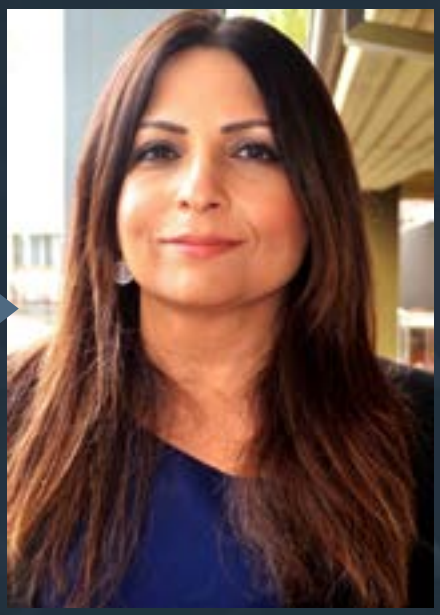
Extensive track record in individual and multi-site management and senior management of a broad range of visitor economy products and businesses, including planning, opening and marketing large tourism products.

Experience in writing submissions for Tourism Awards and Funding Applications for Tourism Products.

Board member of several Tourism Industry Organisations spanning 20+ years, including the role(s) of Treasurer, Vice President, President and also Life Member. Formal training includes business leadership/ management executive programs, two TAFE Diplomas and two Masters Degrees from Macquarie University.

Fazila Farhad

Accomplished business leader, Chair, company director, and tourism advocate with more than 20 years of executive leadership experience spanning hospitality, tourism, banking, business development, and stakeholder engagement. Recognised for providing strategic leadership, governance oversight, financial stewardship, and industry advocacy across commercial and not-for-profit sectors. Serving for approximately nine years as Founder and Chair of the Western Sydney Tourism Taskforce, leading collaboration between government, industry, local councils, community organisations, and private sector stakeholders to support regional economic growth and tourism development. Owner and Managed hospitality businesses operating under leading global brands including IHG, Accor, and Wyndham, with extensive experience overseeing multi-million-dollar operations, managing large workforces, driving commercial performance, and ensuring regulatory compliance.





Gill Robson

I am an experienced tourism, hospitality and education professional with more than 35 years' experience across Australia, the UK, Europe, New Zealand and Fiji.

My career spans operational leadership, customer experience, business development, education and training, and project and change management. I have held senior leadership roles within hospitality and vocational education, including with TAFE NSW, and am passionate about developing people, strengthening regional tourism and raising service standards.

I bring a strong commitment to industry excellence, continuous improvement and inclusive practice, and values the opportunity to support tourism businesses in recognising their achievements and reaching their potential.



Hanna Marshall

Hanna Marshall is passionate about helping regional communities and local businesses thrive. With a background in tourism, marketing, hospitality and business development, she enjoys finding creative ways to connect people with places they'll fall in love with.

As Manager of The Merimbula Visitor Information Centre, Hanna works closely with local businesses, community groups and industry partners to promote Merimbula. She loves turning ideas into reality, whether that's developing marketing campaigns, creating new visitor experiences or helping businesses grow. Hanna believes the best results come from collaboration, authenticity and genuinely caring about the communities and people you work with.

James (Buck) McFarlane

James (Buck) McFarlane is the Founder of Cocky Guides and a Director of Sensory Tourism Australia, working to make tourism more inclusive, immersive and meaningful. Through Cocky Guides, a not-for-profit tour operator, Buck creates tactile, social and sensory-rich travel experiences designed to be enjoyed by blind, low-vision and sighted travellers together. His work focuses on participation rather than observation, using touch, sound, taste, movement and human connection to enrich the visitor experience. Buck also collaborates with tourism operators and destinations across Australia, helping turn accessibility investment into practical visitor experiences that are welcoming, commercially sustainable and genuinely enjoyable for everyone.





Jamie Angus

Jamie Angus is an experienced tourism, events and visitor economy leader with more than 30 years' experience across tourism, hospitality, events, venues and Local Government. He spent 16 years with Dubbo Regional Council, including leading major tourism and cultural attractions and contributing to regional tourism development and visitor experience.

Jamie is now Chief Operating Officer of Australian-owned event technology company 123 Tix and serves on the Board of Taronga Conservation Society Australia. A Graduate of the Australian Institute of Company Directors, Jamie brings strong governance and commercial experience alongside a lifelong passion for regional tourism. He returns as a NSW Tourism Awards judge in 2026.



Jan Kerr

My tourism experience covers 38 years of running a family owned tourism business, and being a member of Cabonne Tourism Advisory Committee. I have been a judge at both the Regional and NSW State Tourism Awards for over 10 years and thoroughly enjoy the process, whilst being able to mentor entrants.

Together with my husband we started the Canowindra International Balloon Challenge in 2010, and organized it for 10 years till retiring in 2019. My job included Media and Marketing, organizing the Balloon Glow, successfully applying for Regional Event Funding and completing entries for NSW and other Tourism Awards. My other interests are CWA of NSW, where I am a former State Vice President and Group President for the Central Western Group. I was on the organizing committee for the State Conference in 2023.

Janet Mackay

Janet Mackay is a Director of TRC Tourism, where for over 25 years she has led multiple tourism, recreation and community projects across Australia, New Zealand and globally.

She specialises in sustainable tourism, regional destination planning, product and experience development and First Nations tourism guiding many landmark projects. Recognised for her strategic insight and collaborative leadership, Janet was named a State Winner at the 2024 NSW Business Awards for her individual contribution to the tourism sector. She brings extensive industry expertise and a commitment to sustainable tourism to her role as a judge.



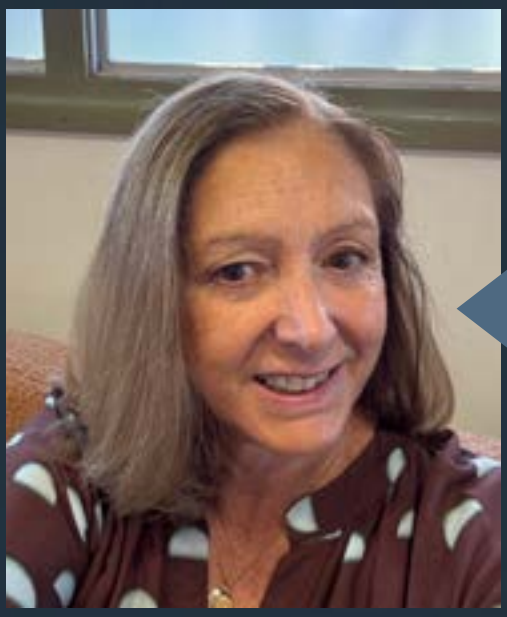


Jennie Curran

Leading a small, but highly effective team, at the Hunter Valley Wine & Tourism Association (HVWTA), a not-for-profit, membership-based organisation and peak industry body for destination marketing and increasing visitation to Hunter Valley Wine Country. I manage the day-to-day operations of the Association and drive the next phase of growth for the organisation.

Experience working in a number of sectors: tourism, professional services, education and engineering in both large multidisciplinary teams and smaller agencies.

Passionate about delivering marketing communications and client engagement support for organisations who are looking to better connect to their customers and stakeholders.



Jenny Lorkin

Long term travel industry professional with a focus on sales & marketing roles in both travel and corporate markets across Australia & New Zealand.

I worked with a variety of companies including International and domestic airlines, interline wholesale and car rental.

Jenny Robb

Jenny is an Industry Development Manager at Destination Southern, passionate about empowering regional operators to thrive. As a former tourism owner-operator who navigated bushfire, flood, and pandemic disruptions, she brings a deep, firsthand understanding of operational resilience and market adaptability.

A dedicated advocate for sustainable regional growth, Jenny brings extensive industry knowledge and evaluation experience to her role as a judge for the NSW Tourism Awards -where she has served for several years - as well as the Outdoors NSW & ACT Outdoor Industry Awards.





Jenny-Lee Scharnboeck

Jenny-Lee Scharnboeck is a passionate advocate for sustainable tourism and community engagement. With over two decades of experience across government, tourism, and environmental sectors, she brings deep insight into visitor economy dynamics and environmental stewardship.

Jenny-Lee has led initiatives such as the Ground Swell program, empowering tourism operators to reduce visitor litter and protect natural assets. Her leadership has helped embed litter prevention as best practice across NSW's tourism industry. As a judge for the NSW Tourism Awards, she champions innovation, responsibility, and excellence in tourism.



Julie Stewart

Julie Stewart is an accomplished Airport Manager with extensive experience in aviation, tourism, and strategic leadership. Passionate about connecting people, places, and opportunities, she works to create seamless travel experiences that support both airport performance and regional tourism growth.

Julie has served on industry and community boards, contributing to initiatives that strengthen regional connectivity, economic development, and visitor experiences. Known for her collaborative leadership style, she enjoys bringing together diverse stakeholders to achieve meaningful outcomes. Calm under pressure and solutions-focused, Julie spends her days keeping airports running smoothly and proving that even turbulence can be managed with the right team and a sense of humour.

Julie Turpie

Julie is a senior events and tourism strategist with extensive experience across major events, destination development, marketing and public sector governance. She has held executive leadership roles at Destination NSW, Museums of History NSW and Brisbane Economic Development Agency, shaping high-value event pipelines that drive economic and community benefit.

Recognised for her strategic insight, collaboration and industry leadership, Julie brings expertise in event acquisition, delivery and evaluation across government, cultural and tourism sectors. Her career includes leading the strategic planning, creative development and delivery of major events, including the internationally recognised Vivid Sydney, strengthening NSW's global profile and visitor economy.





Justine Dowd

Justine has a diverse, accomplished career across tourism, hospitality and travel, in local government, state government, and the private sector. She's currently focused on creating exceptional visitor experiences in the Hunter Valley, drawing on expertise in destination development, stakeholder engagement, and tourism strategy. Previously, she led the Cultural Heritage and Tourism team at the City of Parramatta, overseeing visitor services, cultural heritage interpretation, tourism product development and public programs. She also held leadership roles with Destination NSW. A visionary and collaborative leader, Justine builds strong partnerships, leads multidisciplinary teams, and delivers innovative, sustainable visitor experiences that strengthen communities and destinations.



Karina Groth

Karina has over two decades of experience as a business consultant specialising in the tourism industry.

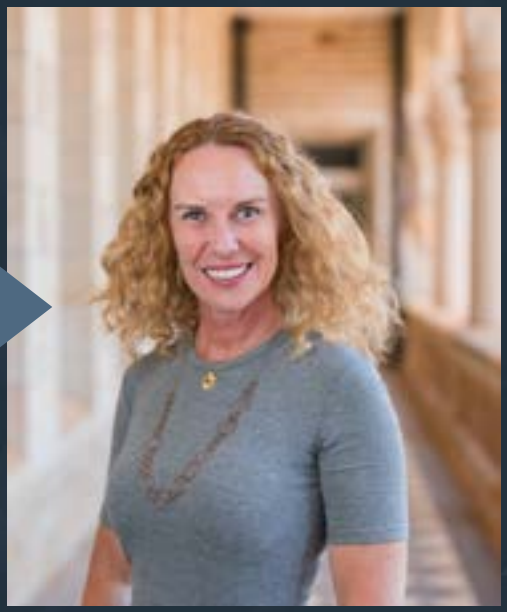
Karina carved a niche for herself as a specialist in grant and bid preparation and award writing and business mentoring services.

She held senior management roles within regional and local tourism organisations, the inbound and retail sectors and is a specialist facilitator on a wide variety of topics.

Katrina Denoux

Katrina Denoux is a pracademic leader with over 20 years' experience spanning higher education, tourism, wellbeing, sustainability, and hospitality entrepreneurship.

Her career uniquely bridges industry practice and academia, bringing real-world insight into learning design, and experience-led business models with wellbeing at its heart, and loves helping hospitality and tourism businesses thrive. She has been a judge for tourism awards for several years.





Keith Baker

Keith's career in tourism, business and government spans many aspects of the industry at the local, regional and state levels for nearly 40 plus years. He has extensive experience in working with organisations and community groups to develop destination and place-based solutions. He has a Bachelor of Business (Tourism) and a Diploma of Counselling.

Keith has represented industry and community groups at conferences and events in Australia and overseas and has been a guest lecturer in tourism and planning at Western Sydney University and has been Chairperson of its External Advisory Committee for the Sustainable Tourism, Hospitality and Events Management programs.



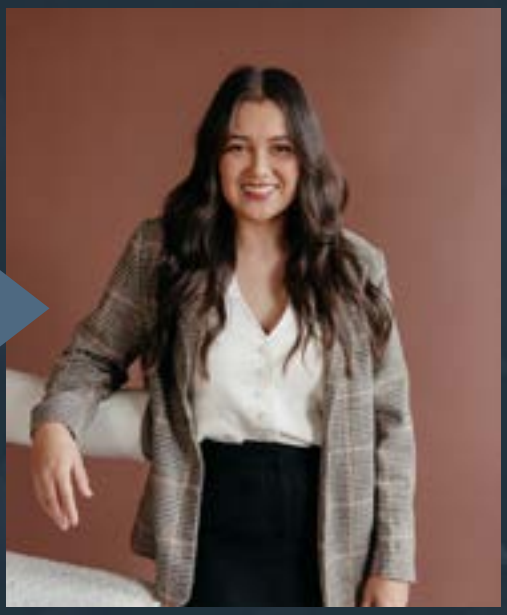
Ken Corbett

Long term tourism industry leader. I have delivered excellent outcomes for many clients over many years. The Paul Hogan "Shrimp on barbie" campaign launch in USA in 1984 was a lifetime highlight. Took great creative and turned it into an Industry team effort lead success with strategies to ensure great outcomes. After leaving Tourism Australia I undertook Senior Management work in Hotels and Attractions led to forming my own business, Australian Attractions in 1995 and for the past 30 years of sales and strategies for amazing Attractions and experiences, primarily helping many businesses develop profitable inbound travellers. Now retired after the business has been taken over by the wonderful Hammon family, in July 2026. They are operators of Scenic World Blue Mountains, BridgeClimb Sydney and Sydney Zoo. My wonderful staff are now with new sales operation for Hammons - Iconiq Experiences.

Kim Parker

Kim recently led the visitor economy and events portfolio at the City of Wagga Wagga, overseeing destination marketing, visitor servicing, industry development and major events. She spearheaded the city's first 10-year Destination Management Plan and drove the development of Wagga Wagga's largest winter festival, Festival of W.

With more than eight years across local government, destination marketing and regional tourism, Kim is known for building strong partnerships with operators and turning strategy into experiences that benefit both businesses and the community. As a state tourism awards judge, she has a real appreciation for operators who are passionate, quality-driven and willing to innovate.





Michelle Wills

Michelle Wills is Marketing and Communications Manager at Balloon Aloft Australia, the country's most experienced hot air ballooning company. She has 30 years' experience in the communications field and has worked as Media Manager for the Sydney 2000 Olympic Torch Relay and Public Relations Manager for News and Current Affairs at the Seven Network Sydney.

While working in her role at Balloon Aloft she has seen the company grow from one flight location to five with thousands of people flying with the company each year. In recent years she managed the launch of New South Wales' first accessible hot-air balloon experience - an achievement of which she is most proud.



Mick Smith

Mick Smith is an Awabakal/Worimi cultural practitioner and senior Aboriginal land manager dedicated to strengthening Aboriginal-led tourism across NSW. As Executive Officer of the NSW Aboriginal Tourism Operators Council (NATOC), Mick supports operators to build sustainable, culturally grounded visitor experiences while championing community empowerment and industry growth.

With qualifications in conservation, fire management, and public safety, he brings deep on-Country knowledge and practical expertise to tourism development. Mick is committed to elevating Aboriginal voices, fostering authentic cultural experiences, and guiding the future of tourism through integrity, innovation, and strong community partnerships.

Nicole O'Donnell

Nicole O'Donnell is an accomplished event management executive with over 20 years' experience delivering high-profile national and international events, programs, and projects. Her expertise spans NSW tourism initiatives, policy launches, and awards, including managing the NSW Tourism Awards and launching the inaugural NSW Top Tourism Town Awards in 2021.

Nicole has played a key role in prestigious events such as the 10th World Chambers Congress and the Sydney Olympic and Paralympic Games. Known for her strategic leadership and stakeholder engagement, she excels at coordinating diverse teams and partners across government, industry, and business to deliver impactful, world-class experiences. She is currently Events Manager at NSW Farmers.





Nivashnie Bromfield

Nivashnie Bromfield is the Chief Operating Officer of the Tourism & Transport Forum Australia and brings more than 20 years' private sector leadership experience across tourism, transport, logistics and professional services. She provides strategic and operational leadership across finance, people and culture, governance, technology, membership, events and organisational performance. Nivashnie collaborates closely with industry leaders, government and key bodies to drive commercial outcomes for industry.

In addition to her deep financial and operational expertise, Nivashnie brings a broad international perspective and strong cultural awareness having lived and worked across Australia, South Africa, Singapore and the United Kingdom.



Paul Nunnari

Paul Nunnari PSM PLY is a three-time Paralympian, Paralympic medallist, accessibility and tourism inclusion leader. Through his work Paul champions the social model of disability and the creation of accessible, inclusive visitor experiences. His expertise spans accessible tourism, events, sport and destination development, with a strong focus on removing barriers and creating opportunities for people with disability to participate, travel and enjoy experiences on an equal basis.

Paul is passionate about positioning accessibility and inclusion as drivers of innovation, participation and economic growth across NSW's visitor economy.

Randall Walker

Randall Walker is Head of Economic Development, Tourism & Special Projects for Navarra Venues. With an extensive background in hospitality and tourism he served as Chairman/CEO of Blue Mountains Tourism and Chairman of Forum Of Regional Tourism Organisations NSW.

He was appointed Facilitator for the NSW Government Regional NSW Taskforce, an industry and government collaboration focused on COVID-19 economic recovery. As Group Manager Enterprise & Marketing for Enterprise Plus Randall led the re-branding and marketing for the largest provider of government funded business advisory programs in NSW/ACT assisting 30,000 business owners. Formal qualifications include a Master of Business Administration (Marketing).





Roberta Dixon-Valk

Roberta has had a lifetime love affair with our estuaries and ocean. She has spent over 30 years woking as a marine ecologist/conservationist to protect these critical environments and the plants and animals that call these ecosystems home. In 2009 Roberta, in conjunction with good friend Amanda Marechal, established Take 3 for the Sea - a proactive response to the ongoing issue of plastic pollution leaking into our oceans and choking marine wildlife.

Roberta, with fellow co-founders, evolved Take 3 to become a leading voice on the impact of plastic pollution crisis, inspiring over 352,000 participants in 129 countries to work together to help solve plastic pollution crisis by removing over 10,000,000 littered items annually.



Robyn Willis Inglis

Robyn has been a dedicated professional in travel, tourism, and hospitality since the 1970s, with a strong emphasis on industry education through roles at Travelscene American Express, Helloworld, AFTA Education (now ATIA), and the Australian Travel Careers Council. Her Honorary roles include being a member of the Australian Travel Training Review Panel, a founding committee member of the Travel Industry Careers Association, involvement with mentoring with TIME, is a judge for the NTIA Awards and is a member of SKAL.

With over 10 years as a judge and lead judge for the NSW Tourism Awards, Robyn is committed to advancing industry professionalism and enhancing the visitor experience.

Robyn Johnson

Robyn Johnson is an experienced senior executive with more than 20 years' experience across tourism, business events, workforce development, economic and regional development, and the not-for-profit sector. She has held senior leadership roles including CEO of Meetings & Events Australia and General Manager Event Delivery at Business Events Sydney, and established and successfully operated her own event management company. Robyn has extensive experience developing business growth strategies, establishing programs, building industry capability and working with government and industry to deliver positive outcomes. A Graduate of the Australian Institute of Company Directors, Robyn serves on the boards of Destination Wollongong and the Australian Respiratory Council.





Sam Tooley

Senior Tourism, Partnerships and Stakeholder Engagement Leader with more than 20 years' experience building strategic relationships, developing collaborative initiatives and delivering measurable outcomes across Tourism, Government, Industry, Events and Community environments.

Previous experience as Managing Director; White Sands Events, Stakeholder Engagement Manager; SaCSA, Industry Engagement Specialist; Destination Sydney Surrounds South and General Manager; Dolphin Watch Cruises

Sara Ang

Sara Ang is a brand strategist and founder of The MAY Brandworks, bringing more than 25 years' experience across tourism, marketing, partnerships and destination development. Her career includes roles with Japan Airlines, Village Roadshow and Australian Wildlife Parks, alongside extensive work supporting businesses, destinations and industry organisations to communicate their value with greater clarity.

A former Silver winner at the NSW Tourism Awards and Business of the Year recipient, Sara understands both the discipline and courage required to build an exceptional visitor experience. As a judge, she brings commercial insight, industry perspective and a respect for the people behind submissions.





Sarah McDougall

Sarah brings more than 20 years' experience across tourism, marketing, communications and events. As the former owner of a winery tourism business, and now focusing on her tourism consultancy, she has worked extensively with tourism businesses and regional destinations, while serving on the Board of Destination Southern NSW and contributing to the region's visitor economy at a strategic level. Sarah currently works with the ABC, creating local content and stories that connect communities with their region.

She brings a strong understanding of regional tourism, destination marketing and authentic visitor experiences to her judging role, with a passion for recognising excellence and celebrating the people behind NSW's tourism industry.

Shan Lawson

I have been involved in the Tourism Awards since 2003 as the Awards Coordinator for nine years. I was then Chair of Judges for Mid-North Coast Regional Awards.

Since 2011 I've been a NSW judge and mentor. I love helping entrants to showcase their amazing businesses and am always stunned by the great work they all do. It's such an honour to be invited into each and every one.

Last year I judged the Australian Tourism Awards and now I am a very happy team member at NSW Tourism Association.



(This isn't my gold medal, it's Leisl Tesch's)



Sharen Nisbet

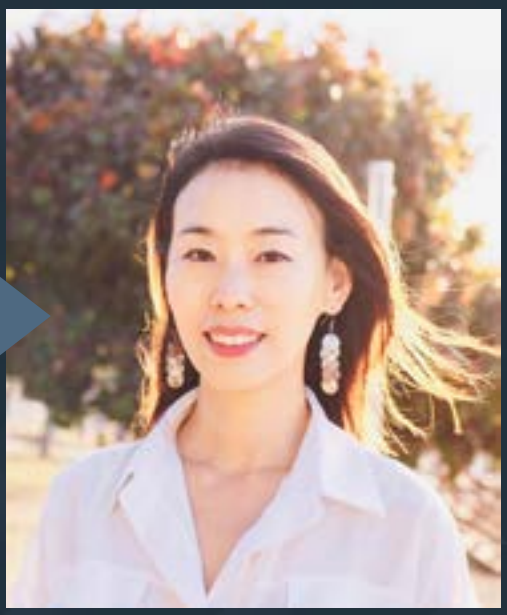
Dr. Sharen Nisbet is an experienced academic and industry collaborator with a strong foundation in tourism, hospitality, and event management. Her interdisciplinary work now spans organisational culture, transformation and governance across a range of business types and industries. Sharen is deeply committed to higher education excellence, with a proven track record in curriculum design, experiential and work-integrated learning initiatives that connect students with real-world industry challenges.

She brings insight, innovation, and a passion for people to every project, shaping future-ready professionals and contributing to sector-wide advancement through teaching and engagement.

Song Ee Hahn

Dr Song Ee Hahn works as an Academic Director and Senior Lecturer in Sydney.

Her professional background includes roles at higher education providers, focusing on curriculum design, educational leadership, and hospitality management.





Steve Hinks

Steve is currently the Director of Taronga Western Plains Zoo and has a background of more than 25 years' experience in the Tourism Industry. Steve has previously held senior roles at BridgeClimb Sydney and Merlin Entertainments where he was Regional General Manager for Sydney Attractions, including Wild Life Sydney Zoo, Sea Life Sydney Aquarium, Sydney Tower Eye and Madame Tussauds Sydney.

After graduating with a Master of Business Management from Charles Sturt University, Steve moved to Regional NSW to take on the role leading NSW's number one Regional Tourist Attraction.



Vanessa Wilton

Vanessa Wilton is a creative and commercially minded brand builder with 20+ years' experience turning ideas into thriving ventures, from founding a branding agency to co founding and scaling Manly Spirits Co., one of Australia's leading craft distilleries. As Co CEO and Marketing Director, she led brand strategy, product innovation, and multi channel growth across a fully integrated manufacturing and experiential business.

Vanessa now brings that commercial and creative expertise to Take 3 for the Sea, Australia's leading plastic pollution prevention charity, as Operations and Partnerships Manager, driving campaigns and community action to reduce litter and protect our oceans.

Wayne Abrahams

Wayne has been involved in Hospitality industry all of his working life.

At peak operating a Food & Beverage division with 65 million per annum.

Wayne has held positions within TAFE as a Commercial Cookery teacher and recently as a Design & Fitour specialists for leading restaurants within Australia.





Wayne Lange

Wayne Lange has over 20 years' experience in tourism and industry leadership across NSW and the Northern Territory.

Most recently CEO of Caravan & Camping Industry Association NSW, Wayne has held senior management and operational roles, with extensive experience in regional tourism, strategic planning, digital innovation, business operations and stakeholder engagement.

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