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MEDIA RELEASE

NSW's North Coast takes to the stage in Regional Tourism Awards partnership with NSW Tourism Association

Destination North Coast and the NSW Tourism Association have partnered to launch the North Coast Regional Tourism Awards. Opening for nominations today, the awards program provides a smooth transition to the state's NSW Tourism Awards, with New South Wales winners proceeding to the national stage for the Australian Tourism Awards in 2026.

A comprehensive Entrant Support Program has been introduced to guide participants through the awards process, offering an unprecedented level of assistance. This includes weekly webinars, Q&A sessions with expert judges, and detailed draft reviews. Designed to foster business growth, strategic reflection, and continuous improvement, this program sets a new benchmark for industry excellence and collaboration.

Debbie Sommers from Port Macquarie Museum, 2024 NSW Gold winner in the Cultural Tourism category, praised the entrant support program:

"We thought the support provided to entrants was outstanding. We attended and rewatched all the webinars, took notes, and acted on all the expert advice wherever we could. We are delighted with the response and media coverage we have been receiving from winning this year's awards. Thank you!"

Through a single nomination, entrants are automatically entered into both the Regional Tourism Awards and the NSW Tourism Awards, with the opportunity to enhance their submission following feedback from judges, allowing businesses to strengthen applications and further highlighting excellence before competing at the state level and beyond.

The awards are evaluated by a panel of highly experienced judges, many of whom have previously assessed the New South Wales and Australian Tourism Awards. Each judge undergoes dedicated training and collaborates in teams to conduct a rigorous assessment of every category. Their detailed feedback provides businesses with valuable insights, supporting growth and continuous improvement.

The North Coast Regional Tourism Awards feature 18 categories that align with the NSW and Australian Tourism Awards. Entrants are required to meet recognised quality standards, either through Sustainable Tourism accreditation or by completing the



Quality Tourism Business Standards. This ensures that every finalist has undergone a rigorous assessment, evaluating all facets of their operation. By upholding these benchmarks, the awards celebrate businesses that exemplify excellence, credibility, and a commitment to industry best practice.

Natalie Godward, CEO of NSW Tourism Association, emphasised the importance of the partnership: “The New South Wales Tourism Association is thrilled to partner with Destination North Coast to deliver a program that not only celebrates excellence but also equips tourism businesses with the tools for lasting success. This initiative provides a clear pathway to the top, supported by an extensive program designed to drive business growth and industry best practice. On awards night, every finalist in the room will have undertaken a deep dive into their operations, gaining invaluable insights that shape their future. By championing regional businesses, we strengthen the entire tourism sector, fostering resilience and long-term prosperity.”

Michael Thurston, General Manager of Destination North Coast, added: “*By choosing to partner with the NSW Tourism Association, Destination North Coast has allowed for entrants to have a seamless pathway from regional to state and national awards. This collaboration also integrates the Quality Tourism Program, equipping businesses with the tools to elevate their operations and exceed consumer expectations.*”

The North Coast Regional Tourism Awards will culminate in a gala event on **Thursday, 31 July** at **Elements @ Byron**.

Key Dates:

- **Nominations Open:** 10 March
- **Weekly Entrant Support Program Commences:** 17 March
- **Nominations Close:** 11 April
- **Submissions Due:** 9 May
- **Finalists Announced:** 10 June
- **Regional Tourism Award Gala:** 31 July

For more information, including entry requirements, eligibility, and how to nominate, visit: <https://dncnsw.com>

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