

Expression of Interest

Mid North Coast/Northern Rivers Tourism Flood Recovery Program

Tourism Development Conference

Event Organiser Brief

1. Overview

The Steering Committee with responsibility for managing the above program is seeking expressions of interest from Professional Event Organisers with the capacity to work with an industry reference group to develop and stage a Tourism Development Conference to take place in the Northern Rivers region of NSW, probably in May 2009 but certainly prior to 30 June 2009.

The Tourism Development Conference is not an existing event, nor is it intended to be a re-hash of any previous similar event. This is an opportunity to define, develop and establish an annual event for the Tourism Industry that will be respected and keenly anticipated each year.

This Brief has been prepared to assist potential Event Organisers in formulating a quotation for development and delivery of the Tourism Development Conference as a project of the Mid North Coast/Northern Rivers Tourism Flood Recovery Program. In future years it is expected that the Conference will be self funded and run on a stand-alone basis.

A Project Reference Group comprising Tourism Managers from the Mid North Coast and Northern Rivers has been established and convened. The Reference Group has identified essential characteristics of the Tourism Development Conference, including some key themes. The Reference Group also developed some initial ideas with regard to content and how the Conference could be structured. The Reference Group has developed and issued a questionnaire to validate/gauge stakeholder interest for particular content. The results of this stakeholder questionnaire are now available and the Reference Group is seeking input and guidance from an experienced event organiser to consider the stakeholder feedback and finalise the detailed format and content of the Tourism Development Conference, consistent with the key themes identified.

This Brief provides information and background to the project, describes how quotations are to be submitted and the process of assessment.

2. Background

During January 2008, parts of North Coast NSW were subject to flooding and heavy rains which had a negative economic impact on the region bounded by Northern Rivers NSW and Mid North Coast NSW. Parts of Northern Rivers (Tweed, Kyogle) were declared Natural Disaster Areas.

Northern Rivers Tourism (NRT) prepared a submission seeking state and federal government disaster relief funding, incorporating an economic impact survey estimating an economic loss of \$18.2 million to the tourism industry of Northern Rivers NSW. The submission included a proposed marketing strategy to declare the region “open for business” and delivery of a range of initiatives intended to promote tourism to the affected areas and provide some counter to the negative economic impact of the adverse weather.

Following this submission, the Prime Minister and Premier of NSW jointly announced a tourism recovery package in support of the affected area(s).

In liaison with Tourism NSW, Northern Rivers Tourism (NRT) has established a Project Steering Committee to oversee the allocation and management of this funding to appropriate activities, including the development and delivery of a Tourism Development Conference to advance the professional development of industry professionals and positively engage a wide range of industry stakeholders.

As Project Owner and on behalf of the Steering Committee, NRT is inviting expressions of interest from qualified and experienced providers, to work with a nominated Project Reference Group to develop and deliver the inaugural Tourism Development Conference that is to take place in the Northern Rivers region of NSW sometime during the period April – June 2009.

3. Project Reference Group – Output Summary

3.1 Concept

To create and establish an event that:

- promotes, facilitates and acknowledges the sustainable, professional and commercial development of tourism;
- demonstrates the value of tourism to the regional and local communities;
- provides networking opportunities for those involved in and affected by tourism;
- clearly demonstrates its efforts to minimize its carbon footprint and mitigate climate change;
- becomes a regular annual or bi-annual function.

3.2 Design Criteria

Some criteria are absolute (i.e. “will” comply) other aspects are conditional (i.e. “may” feature) and are to be considered in the light of feedback to the Stakeholder Questionnaire (see Section 5).

The event will be designed within a generic framework that enables it to be repeated but nevertheless evolve with learning and experience in future years. The design framework will provide key themes for the event and accommodate/reflect local orientation and needs.

The event will be run over two full days and may offer a pre-event networking function.

The event will seek to derive revenue from paid attendance and sponsorship and be sustainable without the Flood Recovery funding available in the inaugural year.

Whilst marketing of the Conference will be packaged to encourage attendance for the whole event/programme, the precise content and timing of the functions/sessions will be structured so that attendance on any single day is also attractive.

The event may include a “Conference Dinner” that will take place in the evening after the proceedings of the first day. If included, the Dinner will be prestigious and will feature a high profile after dinner speaker. The Dinner may offer the opportunity to incorporate the presentation (or announcement) of Tourism Awards etc.

3.3 Key Themes

- 3.3.1 The economic, social and environmental importance of tourism and prevailing issues, threats and opportunities.
- 3.3.2 Commercial Opportunities/Business Development.
- 3.3.3 Professional Skills Development.
- 3.3.4 A sustainable tourism future

For each theme above, examples are provided as to how the theme may be addressed. The nature of the final content will be significantly influenced by feedback to the Stakeholder Questionnaire, hence use of the term “may” in a number of instances.

3.3.1 Theme 1 - The Importance of Tourism

An important objective of the event is to communicate the relevance of tourism to the community in whose region the event is taking place and to a partnership approach to the management of tourism growth (i.e. a partnership between industry, local government, regional tourism associations/authorities and communities).

The event may provide a forum(s) to harvest community input to the development and success of tourism and selected case studies to illustrate how some approaches have been successful.

3.3.2 *Theme 2 - Commercial Opportunities*

The event will offer insight into commercial opportunities for tourism (aimed at potential new entrants) and for related products and services, particularly those that pertain to the region.

The event may incorporate a “Partners to Tourism” program that offers facilitated consultative sessions and free familiarisation activities with a range of local tours, products and services.

3.3.3 *Theme 3 - Professional Development*

There may be a session on the opportunities for professional development in the tourism industry and how professional representation and accreditation is structured.

There will be details of opportunities for continuing education and training, particularly those opportunities available to NRT members.

3.3.4 *Theme 4 - Sustainability*

The event programme will incorporate sessions that explore the sustainability issues and opportunities (and may be incorporated under Theme 2 - Commercial Opportunities) for the tourism industry from a range of perspectives.

The aspiration to run a “carbon neutral” event is consistent with this and underpins Key Theme 4 - Sustainability.

3.4 Event Programme

The event will have some broad-based “macro” input and some that is locally attuned.

Some session times will offer more than one option, running in parallel.

There may be a static exhibition or display related to the event.

3.4.1 Keynote Speakers

The Conference will be opened with a keynote address by a high profile speaker. Some appropriate examples are:

- NSW Minister for Tourism The Hon. Jodi McKay
- Regionally-based Federal MPs (e.g. Janelle Saffin/Justine Elliott)
- Bob Baldwin
- Kay Cottee
- Sorrel Wilby
- Bindi Gove
- Events NSW
- Rhoda Roberts

3.4.2 Session Speakers

On each day at least one of the major sessions is to be a relevant Operator Case Study (that may allow a successful operator to act as a mentor to others) or a session delivered by a professional with expertise in a discipline relevant to tourism and oriented accordingly (e.g. Barry Urquhart - Customer Service/Marketing), Matt Hingerty (ATEC), Inbound Tourism. The emphasis of the session is to be angled towards a pertinent aspect of tourism.

3.4.3 Lunchtime Speakers

The Conference may engage an “entertaining” speaker to present during lunch each day. The speaker will be different on each day of the event. Some examples of appropriate speakers are:

- Mandy Nolan
- Col Elliot
- Lee Kernaghan

3.4.4 Workshop Sessions

The event will offer sessions designed to attract new entrants/potential tourism operators and suppliers, and some sessions designed to acquaint existing participants with commercial initiatives that could be adopted to further develop their tourism businesses.

3.4.5 Plenary Sessions

The event will offer a number of participative sessions in which the local community and other targeted stakeholder groups can actively contribute. The sessions will be professionally facilitated and accommodate individuals, associations (e.g. Chambers of Commerce) and local government representatives.

The sessions will focus on industry issues/aspects that strengthen the linkage between tourism and stakeholders and foster an appreciation and positive attitude towards the advancement of tourism.

Attendance at these sessions may be free of charge, subject to registration in advance.

3.4.6 Conference Dinner

If it is decided to hold a Conference Dinner this should be a prestigious event with a well known after dinner speaker (e.g. Max Walker, Greg Pickhaver aka “HG Nelson”, Vicky Kerrigan etc).

A formal dinner would afford the opportunity to promote a “Gala” event that facilitates the presentation of Tourism Awards etc.

4. Conference Sessions

The Reference Group drafted a list of conference sessions that may be appropriate as part of the overall event program. The list was developed prior to issue of the Stakeholder Questionnaire and will therefore be tempered by the results and views of stakeholders.

The list of possible sessions is included as Attachment 1.

5. Stakeholder Questionnaire

The Reference Group identified likely stakeholders in the Conference and the reasons each may wish to attend. The list and grouping of stakeholders is included as Attachment 2.

A Stakeholder Questionnaire was developed to determine what conference content would be of most interest to stakeholders and thereby provide a basis for the final design of the Conference. A vital requirement of the preferred provider will be to contemplate the responses to the Stakeholder Questionnaire and then work with the Reference Group to finalise the design and content of the Conference, consistent with Sections 3 & 4 of this Brief and in particular to promote the key themes previously identified. The questionnaire was issued via Local Government Tourism Managers to in excess of 2,140 potential participants and a total of 149 responses were received. The tabulated responses are provided as Attachment 3.

A ranking analysis of the stakeholder responses is included as Attachment 4 and this indicates:

5.1 Conference Sessions of most interest:

- Network with other people or organisations with associated professional interests.
- Learn about new/different commercial opportunities, products and services.
- Insights into industry statistics (i.e. economic value of tourism, visitor demographics & behaviours, forecasts).
- Hear professionally presented case studies relevant to your perspective as a tourism industry stakeholder.
- Participate in a professionally facilitated workshop discussion that explores Industry/Community related issues.

5.2 Conference Sessions of least interest:

- Speaking opportunity about your role in the tourism industry.
- Attend a gala dinner/tourism awards presentation evening.
- Be entertained by a professional entertainer/speaker at a business lunch.

5.3 Professional Skills Development

Whilst there is ambivalent interest in sessions specifically related to this topic, the inclusion of a professional skills development component is important, not least because it is likely to significantly influence the capacity of the Conference to attract support funding, particularly from the Department of State & Regional Development (DSRD).

It may be that some of the sessions in which stakeholders have expressed most interest can be legitimately structured to provide a professional skills development aspect and this should be borne in mind by the Event Organiser/Reference Group when the eventual session content is designed.

5.4 Networking

A strong interest in networking has been expressed and from a design perspective it should not be assumed that this requirement can be fulfilled by extending a break for morning tea or lunch, to “provide additional networking opportunity”. It is expected that the Event Organiser/Reference Group will give particular thought as to how networking sessions can be specifically included and structured to enable participants to interface with others in accordance with their interest(s).

5.5 “Pitching” of new products

There was positive interest in learning about new products and services but a predominantly negative response to wanting to “pitch a product or service” This probably reflects that those who responded are the acquirers of new products and services rather than the source providers. Hence it may be necessary to conduct further investigation to identify products and services that may be of interest to stakeholders and to subsequently identify/invite appropriate suppliers to publicise their goods and services at the Conference.

6. Budget/Payment

The total core budget allocated to this project is \$50,000 including a fee to the Event Organiser in the range \$20,000 - \$25,000. It is anticipated that sponsorship, participation fees, in kind support and secondary funding (e.g. from local tourism stakeholders) will considerably augment the core budget. It is expected that expressions of interest from potential Event Organisers will respect the limitations of the core funding and submit a quotation for Event Organisation & Management that falls within or below the parameters of \$20,000 – \$25,000. The Reference Group may be receptive to proposals that result in a larger fee being paid to the Event Organiser, providing the additional element is directly linked to the financial success of the Conference and paid as a “bonus” after finalisation of the project accounts.

Payment will be subject to negotiation with the preferred supplier, however it is anticipated that one third of the contract price will be paid following an initial face to face meeting between the preferred supplier and the Reference Group (to be organised by the preferred supplier).

The second third of the contract price will be paid on submission and approval by the Reference Group of the proposed plan and budget for the Conference including preferred venue, session titles, duration and preferred speakers.

The final third of the contract price will be paid no more than four weeks after completion of the Conference.

Any “bonus” payment will be made on completion of the project accounts and sign off by the Reference Group and Project Accountant.

7. Assessment

All responses to the Expression of Interest invitation will be considered and a recommendation made to the Flood Recovery Program Steering Committee. The preferred provider will be selected in accordance with the consensus view of the Steering Committee.

It is anticipated that the preferred supplier will be notified by mid February 2009 to provide adequate time to develop and run the inaugural Tourism Development Conference prior to 30 June 2009.

8. Submissions

Please submit your expression of interest to:

Jim Critchley
Big River Business Consulting
PO Box 78
Iluka
NSW 2466

Or via e-mail to

jim.critchley@mstu.com.au

8.1 Mandatory Requirements

- Responses must be received by no later than 4.00pm on Friday 23 January 2009.
- The quoted price must fall within or below the range for the Event Organiser fee specified in Section 6. Any proposed “bonus” payment in excess of this fee is to be derived from and contingent upon, net profit returned by the event.
- Responses must propose a strategy to make the event self-funding in future years.

8.2 *Submission Inclusions/Selection Criteria*

Expressions of interest **must** include:

- Details of at least three examples of events managed by the prospective suppliers which the prospective supplier considers to be relevant to the Brief.
- Demonstrated understanding of tourism management and/or destination marketing.
- Stakeholder Management experience/expertise.
- Excellent Budget Management skills.
- Demonstrated ability to deliver events on time and within budget.
- Detail of any sub-contracting proposed to deliver the event.

9. **Clarification & Queries**

Please address any requests for clarification to:

Russell Mills
CEO
Northern Rivers Tourism

Telephone (02) 6688 6217
0448 885 453

E-mail nrt@northernriverstourism.com.au

Possible Sessions

Tourism – Economic perspective

- Tourism in Northern Rivers
- Tourism in Mid North Coast NSW
- Tourism in NSW
- Tourism in Australia

- The Importance of Tourism – LGA rep/Councillor/Mayor/Chamber of Commerce

- The Future of Tourism
- The Tourism Market – what market?

Commercial Opportunities

- Online Travel Marketing in a Web 3.0 World
- Product Packaging vs. Experience Bundling
- Relevance of Destination Marketing (including Regional Branding)
- Customer Service Excellence – The Atticus Finch Approach (walk in someone else's shoes)
- Interpreting research for profit
- Understanding Wholesale distribution
- Reducing your carbon footprint

Tourism & the Community

- Developing a Strategy for Tourism
- So what do the Locals think?
- Tourism Stereotypes – Fact or Fiction?
- What the “powers that be” don't know about tourism
- What's in it for me?

Professional Development

- Representation (Institutes, Associations, Peak Bodies)
- Qualification & Accreditation
- Customer Service (*Aussie Host*)

The event may incorporate the opportunity for tourism operators, local businesses, LGA's and individuals to attend an accredited Customer Service Programme delivered under the auspices of Aussie Host.

This program will occupy a full day and can be attended in isolation to all other sessions, though marketing of the event should seek to package an event delegate fee that includes the Customer Service Programme at an overall discounted rate, to make it an attractive option.

Stakeholder	Why (would they attend)	What (sessions may be of interest)
Local Council	Economic value of tourism Issues / Opportunities Acquire knowledge Education	Keynote Speech Access to other parties Case Studies (e.g. Rainforest Way) Factual presentation (local content) Group sessions/discussion
Associations <i>Including AHA, AVIC, RTO's, DSRD, Northern Rivers Regional Arts</i>	Networking & Communication Leverage opportunities Membership opportunities	High profile speaker
Media	Networking & Communication Sponsorship opportunity/exposure Education, Advertising News Source	Speaking/Presentation opportunity
Operators <i>Including "would be" operators</i>	Networking Education Tourism in context (e.g. sustainability) Business opportunities	Gala Dinner Facilitated discussion (e.g. issues within different sectors) Marketing Practical workshops – pitch your product Case Studies that offer insights to best practice (e.g. international marketing) Product wholesalers Ecotourism Marketing & packaging Possible inclusion of recognition & awards

Attachment 2 - continued

Stakeholder	Why (would they attend)	What (sessions may be of interest)
Agencies <i>Including National Parks, RTA DSRD, Chambers of Commerce</i>	Networking Exposure Identify leverage opportunities Value add opportunities Partnering	Generally as for Local Council, Associations, Operators & Community
Community <i>Includes local business, indigenous community, lobby groups & consumers</i>	Context, Raise issues Communication Education (inc local activities) Awareness & Understanding	Famils, exposure to local activities
Indirect Operators <i>Includes professionals & suppliers to tourism industry (e.g. linen hire, air conditioning operator etc)</i>	Training Exposure Business opportunity	Practical workshops – pitch your product Product knowledge sessions
Distributors	Commercial opportunity Networking Exposure Partnering opportunity	Product knowledge sessions Pitch your product (“Talkabout”)

Tourism Development Conference - Stakeholder Questionnaire - Results Overview

	Not Interested	Interested	Very Interested	Response Total
Hear professionally presented case studies relevant to your perspective as a tourism industry stakeholder	16% (23)	59% (84)	25% (35)	142
Network with other people or organisations with associated professional interests	12% (17)	51% (74)	38% (55)	146
Learn about new/different commercial opportunities, products and services	12% (17)	53% (77)	36% (52)	146
Pitch your product/service to travel distributors in an appointment style format	31% (46)	42% (62)	27% (39)	147
Experience a range of tourism experiences/familiarisations as a 'customer', via field trips	33% (47)	49% (70)	18% (26)	143
Participate in a professionally facilitated workshop discussion that explores Industry/Community related issues	29% (42)	46% (66)	24% (35)	143
Professional Skills Development - Educational/Informative	35% (50)	44% (63)	22% (31)	144
Professional Skills Development - As above but accredited	40% (57)	44% (63)	17% (24)	144
Insights into industry statistics i.e. economic value of tourism, visitor demographics & behaviours, forecasts	18% (26)	49% (71)	33% (48)	145
Speaking opportunity about your role in the tourism industry	56% (80)	36% (52)	8% (11)	143
Attend a gala dinner/tourism awards presentation evening	56% (81)	35% (50)	9% (13)	144
Be entertained by a professional entertainer/speaker at a business lunch	52% (75)	40% (58)	8% (11)	144

Attachment 4

Tourism Development Conference – Stakeholder Questionnaire Results – Ranking Analysis

		Not Interested	Rank	Interested	Rank	Very Interested	Rank	Interested/Very Interested Combined	Rank
1	Hear professionally presented case studies relevant to your perspective as a tourism industry stakeholder	16% (23)	10	59% (84)	1	25% (35)	5=	84	3
2	Network with other people or organisations with associated professional interests	12% (17)	11=	51% (74)	3	38% (55)	1	89	1=
3	Learn about new/different commercial opportunities, products and services	12% (17)	11=	53% (77)	2	36% (52)	2	89	1=
4	Pitch your product/service to travel distributors in an appointment style format	31% (46)	7	42% (62)	9	27% (39)	4	69	6
5	Experience a range of tourism experiences/familiarisations as a 'customer', via field trips	33% (47)	6	49% (70)	4=	18% (26)	8	67	7
6	Participate in a professionally facilitated workshop discussion that explores Industry/Community related issues	29% (42)	8	46% (66)	6	24% (35)	5=	70	5
7	Professional Skills Development - Educational/Informative	35% (50)	5	44% (63)	7=	22% (31)	7	66	8
8	Professional Skills Development - As above but accredited	40% (57)	4	44% (63)	7=	17% (24)	9	61	9
9	Insights into industry statistics i.e. economic value of tourism, visitor demographics & behaviours, forecasts	18% (26)	9	49% (71)	4=	33% (48)	3	82	4
10	Speaking opportunity about your role in the tourism industry	56% (80)	1=	36% (52)	11	8% (11)	11=	44	11=
11	Attend a gala dinner/tourism awards presentation evening	56% (81)	1=	35% (50)	12	9% (13)	10	44	11=
12	Be entertained by a professional entertainer/speaker at a business lunch	52% (75)	3	40% (58)	10	8% (11)	11=	48	10