



Destination
Sydney Surrounds South

Don't forget to take
me with you!

I am full of great notes,
ideas and resources.

Visitor Economy Symposium 2025

People, Productivity & Profit

14th May 2025 | The Pavilion Kiama



Contents

3	Welcome
4	Destination Sydney Surrounds South Overview
5	Stay in the Loop
6	Symposium Program
8	Meet the Destination Sydney Surrounds South Board of Directors
10	Destination NSW & Destination Sydney Surrounds South
12	People Power & Winter Opportunities: Strengthening Voice & Boosting Profit
14	Feeding the AI Beast: How Consumers Use It & How Industry Can Benefit
19	Operator Pitch
20	Australian Tourism Data Warehouse (ATDW)
22	Deep Dive Sessions
23	Media: Know How to Use It!
25	To-Do List

Acknowledgement of Country

We pay respect to the Traditional Custodians of the land we now call New South Wales and acknowledge their enduring culture and continued connection to Country.

Destination Sydney Surrounds South pays our respect to Elders, past and present, and acknowledge future generations of Aboriginal people. We acknowledge visitors from across Australia and around the world are made welcome on Aboriginal lands by the Traditional Custodians of NSW.

We acknowledge the significant contribution made by Aboriginal people to the development and promotion of the visitor economy.

Welcome

Welcome to the Visitor Economy Symposium 2025. We hope you use this handbook to take lots of notes and write down your key takeaways. Keep it handy to review and reach out if you want to chat.

At Destination Sydney Surrounds South, we work in close partnership with Destination NSW to deliver tailored support that helps tourism businesses grow - no matter where they are on their journey. From idea to market-ready, we offer practical workshops, networking events, and tailored assistance. Our role is to guide operators through the tourism ecosystem, connecting them with the right tools, programs, and opportunities to thrive.



**Scan the QR code to check out
our website for more info about
who we are and what we do**

ATDW Optimisation Sessions

As part of our Symposium, we're offering pre-booked one-on-one ATDW Optimisation Sessions with the ATDW team to help you maximise the impact of your online profile. These tailored sessions provide expert advice to enhance your visibility and performance across the distribution network.

ATDW Check In - missed out on a session?

If you've missed out on an ATDW check in today, scan the code below to book an optimisation session.



Overview

Destination Sydney Surrounds South (DSSS) is the champion of the visitor economy in our region. We proactively engage with stakeholders to identify, prioritise and facilitate opportunities for regional visitor economy growth.

DSSS collaborates with industry, local government and state government to deliver projects that drive visitation, increase expenditure and support dispersal across our region.

Product and industry development are our focus areas. We can add value to the work that is already being undertaken at a local and state government level.

The Sydney Surrounds South region encompasses 11,000 square kilometres and is home to over 525,000 people across the five local government areas of Kiama, Shellharbour, Shoalhaven, Wingecarribee, and Wollongong.

The Destination Networks (DNs) are 'administrative zones' responsible for delivering on NSW Government objectives to grow the visitor economy of regional NSW.

Our key responsibilities include:

- Develop and implement the region's Destination Management Plan.
- Represent the region's interests to Destination NSW and the NSW Government.
- Work with Destination NSW on a range of initiatives including, industry development.
- Collaborate with tourism organisations, committees and Local Government tourism teams.
- Provide assistance to strengthen applications for funding of events or tourism projects.
- Deliver education and training initiatives.
- Advocate for the growth of the region's visitor economy.

Useful Industry Resources & Links

DSSS website: dnsss.com.au

- DSSS Destination Management Plan

Destination NSW website: destinationnsw.com.au

- Visitor Data and Statistics
- NSW Strategies and Plans, including the Visitor Economy Strategy 2030
- Business Development Resources, including NSW First Program

Tourism Australia website: tourism.australia.com

Tourism Research Australia website: tra.gov.au



Stay in the Loop

Instagram

Follow us:



LinkedIn

Follow us:



Our Newsletter

Sign up:



Key Contacts

Shannan Perry-Hall
General Manager
shannan@dnsss.com.au
0418 776 640

Tash McQueen
Business & Partnership Specialist
tash.mcqueen@dnsss.com.au
0448 437 052

Kylie Bushby
Business Development Manager
kylie.bushby@dnsss.com.au
0421 242 359

Lauren Bingham
Business Support
lauren.bingham@dnsss.com.au
0459 346 304

Symposium Program

TIME	DETAILS
9:00am	Registrations Open ATDW Check In - Bring your device and meet an ATDW expert to create or improve your own listing – register here before the event
9:20am	Welcome to Country Aunty Gwenda Jarrett
9:30am	Setting the Scene Lyndel Gray, Chair, DSSS
9:45am	Destination NSW
10:05am	Destination Sydney Surrounds South Shannan Perry-Hall, General Manager, DSSS
10:15am	People Power & Winter Opportunities: Strengthening Voice & Boosting Profit Panel Session – Tourism Managers, Facilitator – Libby Cupitt A thriving visitor economy relies on strong advocacy and smart seasonal strategies. In this session, Tourism Managers will discuss how the industry can unite to amplify its voice, ensuring the true value of tourism is recognised and supported. The conversation will also explore winter opportunities, including how businesses can leverage marketing efforts to drive visitation. Join this insightful panel to discover how people power can build a more profitable and sustainable industry.
10:55am	MORNING TEA – 15 mins – quick break and sit back down with something to eat
11:10am	Feeding the AI Beast: How Consumers Use It & How Industry Can Benefit Liz Ward, Founder & CEO - Tourism Tribe & Operator Panel Session AI is changing the way consumers plan, book, and experience travel, but are you keeping up? This session will explore how travellers are using AI tools to discover destinations, make decisions, and personalise their experiences. More importantly, we'll dive into what this means for tourism operators and how you can 'feed the beast' with the right content, strategies, and tools to stay visible, relevant, and efficient. Walk away with practical insights to boost productivity and ensure AI works for you, not against you. Plus, join three tourism operators at different stages of their AI journey as they share real-world insights into how AI is transforming their businesses. From first-time adopters to those fully embracing automation, this panel will explore practical applications, time-saving benefits, and lessons learned along the way. This session offers valuable takeaways to help you work smarter, not harder to increase your productivity .
12:10pm	Operator Pitch Kylie Bushby, Business Development Manager, DSSS and Operators Being able to effectively pitch your business is a valuable skill to have for any business owner. This becomes even more important when you start working with media or the tourism trade. In this interactive session, operators will share their pitch with you. So, get ready to take some notes on what could work for you and your business.
12:30pm	LUNCH – A great opportunity to build your network. Remember to sign up for your afternoon Deep Dive!
1:40pm	Australian Tourism Data Warehouse (ATDW) Jan Hutton, CEO, ATDW In a digital world, visibility is everything. Jan Hutton, CEO of ATDW, will share the latest updates on ATDW's journey and how this powerful platform is evolving to support businesses across the visitor economy. Learn how one (free) listing can open the door to countless opportunities, reaching travellers across dozens of key tourism websites. Now that's productivity in action.

Destination Sydney Surrounds South

TIME	DETAILS		
2:00pm	DEEP DIVE SESSIONS (Concurrent Discussions) Session 1: Power Your People : Winning the Talent Challenge Session 2: Going Global: Unlocking Productivity Through International Markets Session 3: Business Events that Pay Off: Maximising Profit & Impact Key insights from these sessions will be shared during the wrap-up.		
2:05pm	PEOPLE – Power your People <i>Tom Ellicott and James Welch, Access Law Group, Coralie McCarthy, Business Illawarra</i> In this practical and straight-talking session, legal experts Tom Ellicott and James Welch from Access Law Group will join Coralie McCarthy from Business Illawarra to guide you through the essentials of powering your people . From employment contracts and award obligations to managing volunteers and flexible arrangements, this session will unpack what you need to know and what you need to have in place.	PRODUCTIVITY – Going Global <i>Rachael Glendinning, Industry Relations Manager, Tourism Australia</i> Want to take your visitor offering to the world, and boost your productivity in the process? In this forward-looking session, Rachael Glendinning from Tourism Australia will share the latest international travel trends, insights into key global markets, and what's driving visitation to Australia right now. She'll also unpack how Tourism Australia is working to support industry productivity by opening global opportunities and streamlining pathways for operators to get involved.	PROFIT – Business Events that Pay Off <i>Expert Panel Session</i> Business events are big business, when done right. In this practical panel session, we'll explore the profit potential of business events from three key perspectives : the Professional Conference Organiser (PCO), the Venue, and the Destination. The panel will break down what it takes to attract, plan, and deliver successful events that not only meet client expectations but also generate real returns for regional operators.
3:15pm	AFTERNOON TEA – A great opportunity to build your network.		
3:40pm	WRAP UP – Concurrent session key takeouts & key learnings from the day <i>Facilitator – Mark Bourne</i>		
4pm	Media – know how to use it! Proudly Supported by Business Illawarra <i>Coralie McCarthy, Director, Business Illawarra and Kathy Sharpe, Editor, Illawarra Mercury</i> Media can be one of your most powerful tools, if you know how to use it. In this dynamic session, Coralie McCarthy from Business Illawarra will share how the organisation is advocating for regional businesses and amplifying local stories. Then, hear directly from Kathy Sharpe, Editor of the Illawarra Mercury, as she reveals what makes a great media story, how to pitch effectively, and what journalists are really looking for.		
4.45pm	Symposium Concludes <i>Networking over refreshments with event concluding at 6pm.</i>		

Meet the Board of Directors



Lyndel Gray | Chair | lyndel.gray@dnsss.com.au

Lyndel has had a long career in the Australian tourism industry and most recently was the CEO of the NSW Caravan, Camping and Manufactured Housing Industry Association, a role she held for 13 years.

She was Executive Director Tourism at Destination NSW following the merger of the State's Tourism and Major Events agencies, after heading up Tourism NSW for three years from 2008 – 2011. Prior to joining Tourism NSW, Lyndel was Executive General Manager, Western Hemisphere at Tourism Australia, and responsible for its Americas, UK/ Europe, New Zealand, South Africa and Middle East operations.

She also held senior executive roles with Tourism Australia in the USA for fourteen years, from 1987 – 2001, based in New York and Los Angeles.

Lyndel's significant contribution to the Industry was recently acknowledged when she was awarded the Outstanding Contribution by an Individual at the 2024 NSW Tourism Awards. Lyndel is also a member of the Board of Surfing NSW and holds the role of Deputy Chair.



Libby Cupitt | Director | libby.cupitt@dnsss.com.au

Libby Cupitt has 15 years of experience in the hospitality, tourism, and wine industries and is the Strategic Partnerships Manager at Cupitt's Estate, a renowned family-operated hospitality and tourism business in Ulladulla. Libby serves on the Executive Committee for the Shoalhaven Coast Wine Association, South Coast Tourism Industry Association, and South Coast Food Alliance.

As a problem solver, connector, and advocate, Libby has built strong partnerships that have meaningfully impacted the broader tourism community. Her strategic thinking and ability to engage with stakeholders have driven successful initiatives that enhance the region's tourism offerings.

Libby's background as a town planner and her hands-on experience in the tourism industry gives her a unique perspective in her board role. Her understanding of urban planning and focus on sustainable development allow her to help shape strategies that support growth and prosperity in the Sydney Surrounds South region.

Her love for travel, exploring local food scenes, and discovering great wine align perfectly with her work in hospitality and tourism. These passions inspire her to create unforgettable visitor experiences and contribute to the region's reputation as a must-visit destination.


Mark Bourne | Director | mark.bourne@dnsss.com.au

Mark Bourne has over 25 years' experience in the wine industry with several wine and agri-tourism businesses based in the Southern Highlands. Mark was the founding president of the Southern Highlands vignerons association and has led the region twice more over a 20 year period in the food and wine sectors. As a respected strategic thinker and advocate he is highly skilled in business management, event planning and delivery, industry research innovation and technology, coupled with strong communication and media skills. He is a member of the steering committee for the NSW government AgSkilled program and is a member of both the NSW and Australian wine industry biosecurity committees.

Mr Bourne is the current chair of the board and president of the NSW Wine Industry Association and a board member of the national wine industry peak organisation, Australian Grape and Wine. Mark is also a director at Charles Sturt University responsible for industry and research partnerships in horticulture and agriculture, with a particular focus on digital, data and sustainability outcomes. His strong passion for agriculture, tourism and regional visitor economy growth alongside his experience in advocacy is a valuable asset to the DSSS board.


Roger Stephan | Director | roger.stephan@dnsss.com.au

Roger Stephan worked in senior roles in and for State and Local Government for over thirty years including ten years as CEO of Hunter Councils and CEO of Strategic Services Australia Ltd – growing the latter to be one of the largest and most diverse local government-owned suppliers of services in the country.

As a consultant, Roger specialised in business development, corporate strategy, corporate governance and the Visitor Economy. For a period of time, he was CEO of Tourism Hunter.

Roger is currently CEO of the Illawarra Shoalhaven Joint Organisation, a Board Member of RDA Illawarra Shoalhaven and is at the forefront of strategies to build strategic alignment between government at all levels and the business sector.


Dave Campbell | Director | dave.campbell@dnsss.com.au

Dave Campbell is a creative director, start-up founder, and business development consultant, renowned for his expertise in culture, strategy, and growth. With a background in hospitality, tourism, and the startup sector, Dave has established himself as a natural leader and an entrepreneur with a keen eye for creative development, partnerships, communication, and strategy.

Dave has worked as Executive Chef in Australia, London, New York, and Los Angeles. As the founder of Ducking Good Social in 2008, Dave pioneered a consultancy arm that partnered with primary producers to enhance the value of their products. Through his consultancy, Dave has provided invaluable guidance in product and concept development, business planning, technology, talent and culture, and recruitment and retention planning. Dave's career includes founding and operating two Sydney-based restaurants and two South Coast NSW restaurants, where he cultivated partnerships with key stakeholders, fostering domestic and international tourism for the region. Currently serving on the Operational Management team at The Shellharbour Club, a members-owned nonprofit organisation, Dave oversees strategic and development planning for multiple venues.

Destination NSW | Upcoming Events

Experience Development Workshop

Sage Hotel, Wollongong

21 May 2025 | 9.30am to 3.00pm

Get tips and insights on:

- The foundations of great visitor experiences
- Understanding different types of visitors
- Creating bookable experiences and refining existing ones to meet your visitors' needs
- Where to find tools, resources, and support
- This workshop is part of the NSW First Program, delivered by Destination NSW

Register here:



NSW First Program

The NSW First Program, offered by Destination NSW, is designed to assist visitor economy businesses in developing, promoting, and selling world-class experiences.

- **Develop:** Access practical insights through face-to-face workshops, webinars, and online resources to create and enhance visitor experiences, whether you're starting out or expanding your business.
- **Promote:** Learn effective marketing strategies to promote your visitor experience online, through media, and via local networks using well-planned marketing tools.
- **Sell:** Gain knowledge on selling your bookable tourism products directly to customers via your website and through third-party distributors like online travel agents, making your products widely available online.

Learn more:



Destination Sydney Surrounds South



For helpful info, upcoming events and project updates, head to the DSSS website!



Bronwen Gwynn-Jones

Director, Content and Creative Services at Destination NSW

Bronwen oversees delivery of content strategy, editorial, content production and asset distribution across all arms of content marketing. With an extensive background in media, publishing and advertising, including as head of several creative and media agencies, Bronwen combines business management, strategy and creative experience to deliver growth for brands and businesses.

Notes

[illegible]

People Power & Winter Opportunities: Strengthening Voice & Boosting Profit

A thriving visitor economy relies on strong advocacy and smart seasonal strategies. In this session, Tourism Managers will discuss how the industry can unite to amplify its voice, ensuring the true value of tourism is recognised and supported. The conversation will also explore winter opportunities, including how businesses can leverage the off-season to drive visitation, increase revenue, and create year-round resilience. Join this insightful panel to discover how people power and seasonal strategies can work together to build a more profitable and sustainable industry to drive growth during challenging times.

**Kristy Mayhew**

Shoalhaven City Council
marketing@shoalhaven.nsw.gov.au

**Melissa Ritchie**

Shellharbour City Council
melissa.ritchie@shellharbour.nsw.gov.au

**Jeremy Wilshire**

Destination Wollongong
jwilshire@visitwollongong.com.au

**Sally Bursell**

Kiama Municipal Council
sallyb@kiama.nsw.gov.au

**Suzanne Hannema**

Destination Southern Highlands
suzanne.hannema@wsc.nsw.gov.au

What's your number one takeaway from this session?

Notes

[illegible]

Feeding the AI Beast: How Consumers Use It & How Industry Can Benefit

**Liz Ward**

CEO, Tourism Tribe

Liz is a co-founder of Tourism Tribe and a passionate advocate for innovation in tourism marketing and distribution. With over 30 years of experience, she's a recognised expert in business strategy and digital transformation, helping businesses of all sizes identify their goals, ideal customers, and growth opportunities. Highly sought after as a mentor, presenter, and facilitator, Liz is known for her big-picture thinking and ability to guide clients through the entire customer purchase journey. Her background spans marketing, leadership, communication, and software project management, including the startup of ATDW.

Included here are some of the tools and exercises demonstrated in this session. Don't forget to take some notes from the operator panel discussion too.

Suggested Exercise

ChatGPT: ChatGPT.com

Put yourself into the mindset of your ideal guest and request ChatGPT develop an itinerary for you. Be specific and challenge it to develop the best possible holiday plan with products and experiences to meet your ideal customer's needs.

*** Analyse the results ***

Does your product feature? What websites has ChatGPT sourced the results from.

GuideGeek: Instagram @guidegeek

Simply message GuideGeek on Instagram and repeat the request above.

Did you get a similar result?

Layla: Layla.ai

When you repeat the request above, what differences do you see in the results?

Notes

Feeding the AI Beast: How Consumers Use It & How Industry Can Benefit (continued)

Prompts to Develop Your Marketing Plan

The prompts provided below are ideal to start you off in developing your draft marketing and social media plan in ChatGPT. Modify them as you need and check, check the output.

Prompt 1:

I would like to assist [business name] to develop a marketing plan. To start with I'd like to develop a unique selling proposition.

Please review their website including homepage [business website]

And suggest a draft unique selling proposition.

Prompt 2: NEEDED IF CHATGPT CAN'T ACCESS WEBSITE

Here is some useful copy from the homepage and about page

Prompt 3: Could you suggest an ideal customer persona for this business?

Prompt 4: Now I'd like to develop some content themes for use in digital marketing and social media. What would you suggest?

Prompt 5: Could you consolidate these down to 5 content themes, but don't lose the good ideas you've suggested.

Prompt 6: Which social media platforms and forms of marketing do you think should be prioritised for this business based on their ideal customer and USP?

Prompt 7: Could you suggest a social media schedule with suggested post ideas based on the content themes and prioritised channels of Facebook, Instagram and Pinterest. The staff don't have a lot of time to do social media, but could commit to two posts per week on the three channels?

Prompt 8: Please expand to include the post formats including Reels and Stories. Total posts per week would be 2 image or carousel posts, 1 Reel, 1 Story.

Prompt 9: Please put this into a calendar format for me for the month of March 2025.

Prompt 10: I can't see the formats or calls to action, can you include them in the table as well please?

Prompt 11: Can you create example posts for week 1?

Prompt 12: What hashtags should I use?

Prompt 13: Please consolidate the final outputs of these prompts into a marketing plan document

Time Saving Content Repurposing Tools

- **Otter.ai:** transcribe audio and video files for use as blogposts and social media posts
- **Canva.com:** convert content quickly into other formats using templates
- **Veed.io:** convert long form videos into reels

Notes

[illegible]

[illegible]

For inspiration, check out this helpful guide on developing an effective pitch: Destination NSW - Pitching and Presenting to Trade



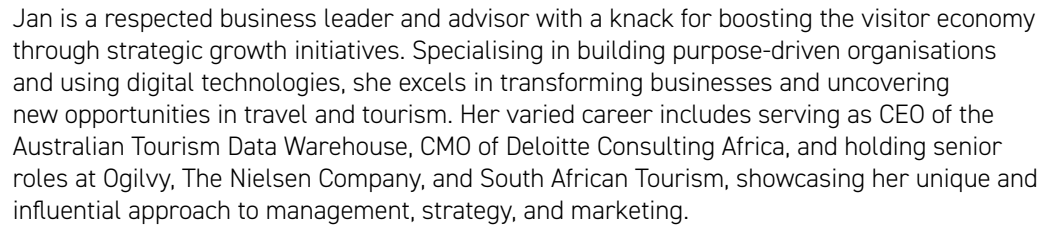
Operator Pitch

A well-prepared presentation is essential when meeting with the travel trade or media. A succinct and persuasive sales pitch will catch the attention of potential buyers early in your conversation. It allows you to give them a clear understanding of what product you are offering and how it will benefit their customers.

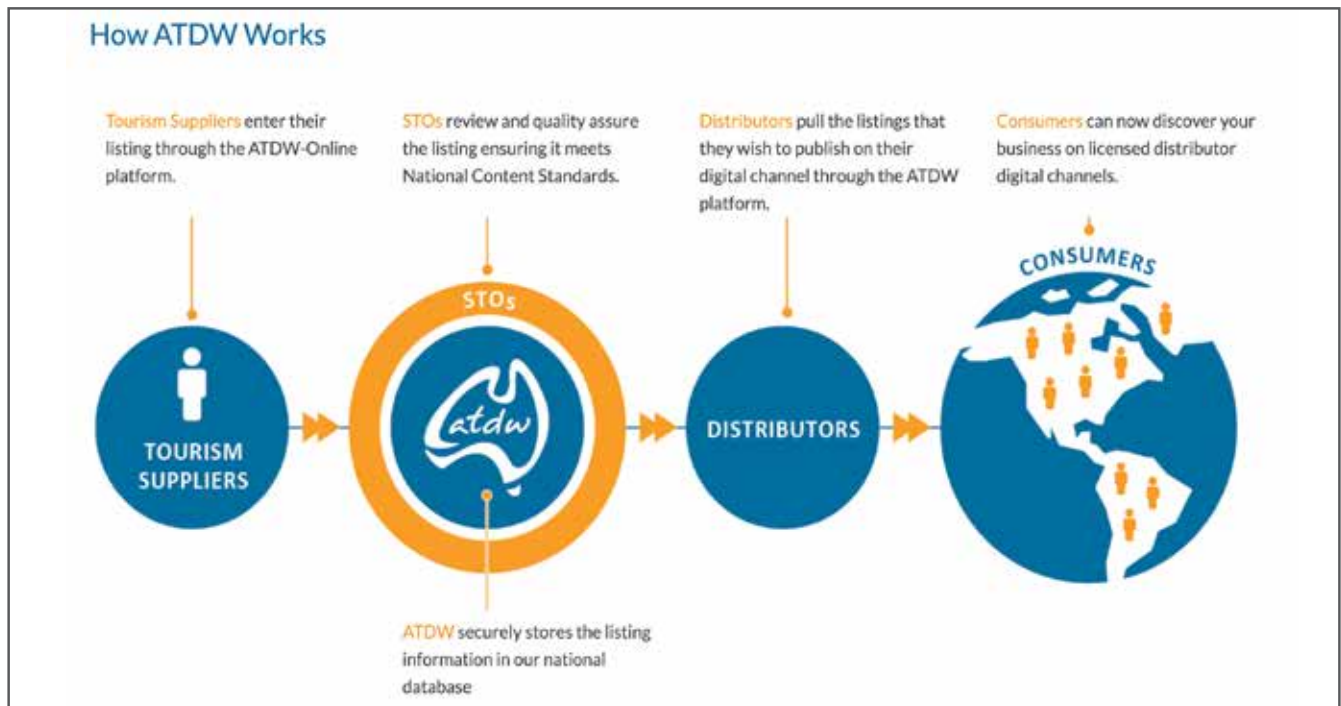
A Good Sales Pitch is...

1. **Brief** - limited to about a minute.
2. **Concise** - provide a topline view of what your product is, where it is, what makes it special and who it appeals to.
3. **Inspiring** - give some sense of how your product makes a visitor feel – you are in the business of making memories, so your pitch should tap into that.
4. **Tailored to your listeners** - don't assume they know about your product and/ or destination.
5. **Clear, well-practiced and confidently delivered** - show you know exactly what you are offering and why they should want it.

As you listen, write down some ideas you will include in your own pitch:

[illegible]

Australian Tourism Data Warehouse



Top tips for a great ATDW listing!

1. **A captivating description**
2. **Enticing imagery** – authenticity is key
3. **Level up your listing with video**
4. **Stay seasonal** - adding 'deals' when relevant

Keen to learn more? --->



How to 'Get Connected'!

You may sometimes hear the term 'Get Connected' used when referring to ATDW. It is important to know that Get Connected is the website membership program facilitated by Destination NSW for NSW tourism operators that maximises digital marketing exposure across Destination NSW's consumer websites sydney.com & visitnsw.com utilising the ATDW platform.

The Get Connected membership program is free, and Destination NSW has a dedicated team on hand to assist operators with their ATDW listings.

Learn more --->



Deep Dive Sessions

Power Your People: Winning the Talent Challenge

Tom Ellicott & James Welch, *Access Law Group* & Coralie McCarthy, *Business Illawarra*

Key takeaway 1: _____

Key takeaway 2: _____

Key takeaway 3: _____

Going Global: Unlocking Productivity Through International Markets

Rachael Glendinning, *Tourism Australia*

Key takeaway 1: _____

Key takeaway 2: _____

Key takeaway 3: _____

Business Events That Pay Off: Maximising Profit & Impact

Expert Panel

Key takeaway 1: _____

Key takeaway 2: _____

Key takeaway 3: _____

Media - Know How to Use It!



Here's a space to jot down all of your learnings from this session.

[illegible]

[illegible]

Thank You For Joining Us

Thank you for being a part of the Visitor Economy Symposium 2025. We hope you enjoyed the day and learnt something new, and built your network of industry contacts.

We know that working in the tourism and hospitality industry can be challenging sometimes, but please know that you're not alone and there are a number of resources designed to support you and your business.

We encourage you to use the following QR codes to explore these handy resources, connect with industry, and stay in the know for future learning development opportunities.

To-Do List

Put your learnings from today into action!

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

Visitor Economy Symposium 2025

People, Productivity & Profit

Destination Sydney Surrounds South

W: www.dnsss.com.au

E: info@dnsss.com.au



Destination
Sydney Surrounds South