

Regional Economy Strategies Engagement Summary

Central Coast Council



Between 21 January to 4 March 2026, Council sought feedback on three major strategies which outline a long-term vision to create more opportunities for locals and enhance the Central Coast as a great place to live, work and visit. These are the:

- Draft Economic Development Strategy 2026-2030
- Draft Destination Management Plan 2026-2029
- Draft Events Strategy 2026-2030

The community could share their feedback by:

- Attending the in-person pop-up events in each ward
- Attending live webinars
- Completing three different surveys
- Dropping a pin on the map
- Emailing or posting a submission



Overall, there was a general sentiment of support for the strategies and plans, with suggestions for priority areas within each one and ideas for overall improvements ongoing.

How you connected



A total of **12** submissions received via email/post



A total of **160** Economic Development surveys completed



5 pop ups in each Council Ward with conversations with over **1,000** people



A total of **17** Destination Management Plan surveys completed



1 overall webinar with **35** attendees, and **1** Events webinar with **7** attendees



A total of **7** Events Strategy surveys completed



Your Voice Our Coast **18,651** views



A total of **20** pins on the Events Strategy map



Targeted stakeholder emails - Delivered to over **30,000** recipients



Meta paid - Reach of **150,214** and **19,508** engagements



Displayed on customer service digital screens



Instagram – **5,064** people were reached, generating **132** interactions



Media release delivered to **113**, with a **40%** open rate



Facebook – **45,458** people were reached, generating **384** interactions



eNews - Delivered to **20,890** people



LinkedIn – **3,554** people were reached, generating **110** interactions



Coast Connect print & ad delivered to **62,000+** readers



Printed media coverage in Coast Community News

Radio campaign with **58** spots, and coverage on STAR FM

Executive Summary

Economic Development Strategy

Majority of those engaged agreed with the key themes of the strategy, with the most important theme identified as 'strategic alliances for regional growth', and destination brand and visitor economy'.



The top priority outcomes of the strategy from the feedback were:

- Vibrant town centres and activity places (including night-time economy)
- Local jobs and career opportunities
- A stronger more resilience local economy

Feedback calls for Council to prioritise fixing basic infrastructure, cleanliness, transport and town centre renewal, move from high-level strategy to visible delivery, provide more practical support for local businesses, and balance tourism growth with liveability, environmental care and community confidence.

Destination Management Plan



The top priorities for tourism experiences on the Central Coast include

- Beaches and waterways
- Events and festivals
- Wildlife and nature
- National parks and nature walking trails

The top themes identified for council to prioritise were

- Signature events
- Regional connectivity and
- Identity, awareness and place

The overall sentiment of the Destination Management Plan was that people want it to be deliverable and grounded, by prioritising signature events and connectivity, but back it with basics (maintenance, clean waterways), strong sustainability, clearer destination identity (including surf culture), practical operations (waste), and credible delivery partnerships.

Events Strategy



The top types of events the community would like to see:

- Signature Events that activate our places and boost the local economy
- Food and wine events

Top locations the community would like to see events:

- Gosford and surrounds (26%)
- The Entrance and Northern Lakes (25%) and
- Wyong and Tuggerah (20%)

Strong support from event organisers on the actions within the strategy, all respondents in agreement with all the actions. Event organisers want a simpler, less compliance-heavy system that better supports local and NFP events, works collaboratively with existing businesses, activates places without negative impacts, and delivers more contemporary, inclusive programming - particularly modern music and cultural events - to build pride, vibrancy and economic benefit across the region.

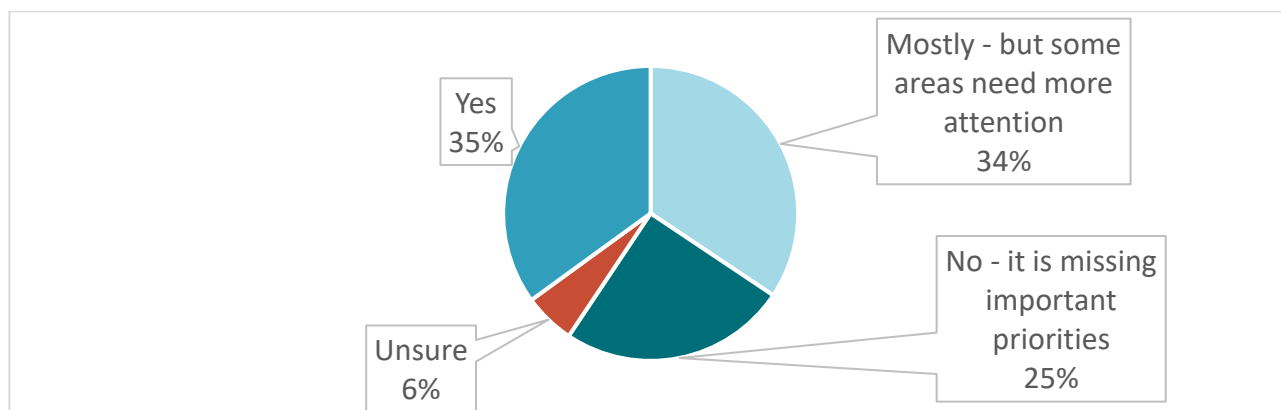
Who did we hear from?

Across the 3 strategies/plans, and all the engagement methods, we heard from over **950 people**.

Of those who provided feedback **online** (n=188), and identified their relationship to the central coast (of which respondents could pick multiple options), **majority (n=144) were residents**, a small portion were local Indigenous and First Nations organisations (n=2), some local business owners (n=33), or local workers (n=22), and others were visitors to the Coast (n=10). We did hear from industry bodies or business of chamber members (n=4), students (n=2) and State and/or Federal Government agency members (n=2).

Economic Development Strategy

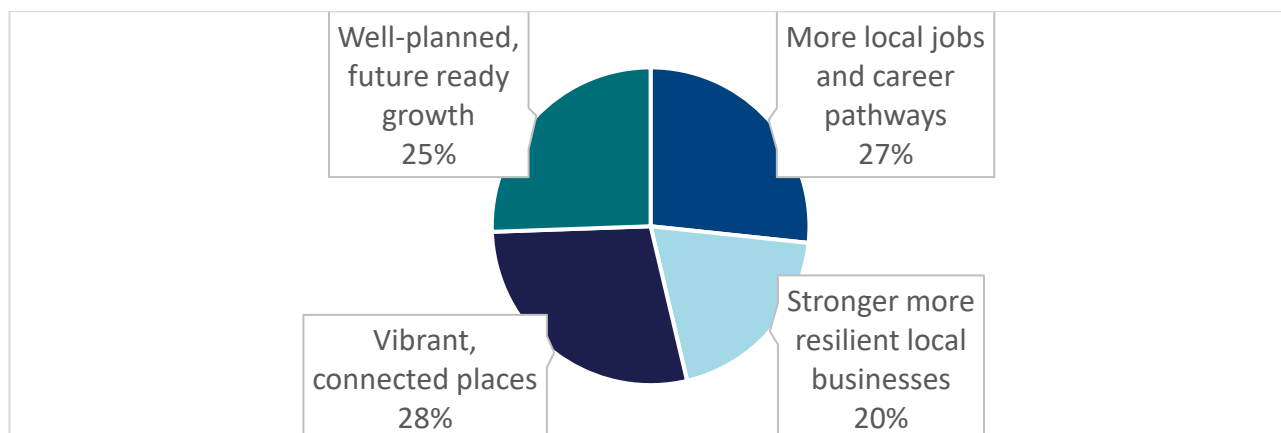
Survey respondents were asked if the draft Economic Development Strategy focuses on the priorities and direction most needed for our region's economy over the next four years.



Overall, does the draft Economic Development Strategy focus on the priorities and direction most needed for our region's economy over the next four years?, total responses 160.

Strategic themes of the document

Participants at the five pop-ups were asked to place a sticky dot on what matters most for the local economy by 2030, with four options to choose from. Overall, there was quite an even spread of dots on the activity boards at each location, with 'vibrant connected places' receiving the most dots (n=328, 28%), closely followed by 'more local jobs and career pathways' (n=311, 27%).

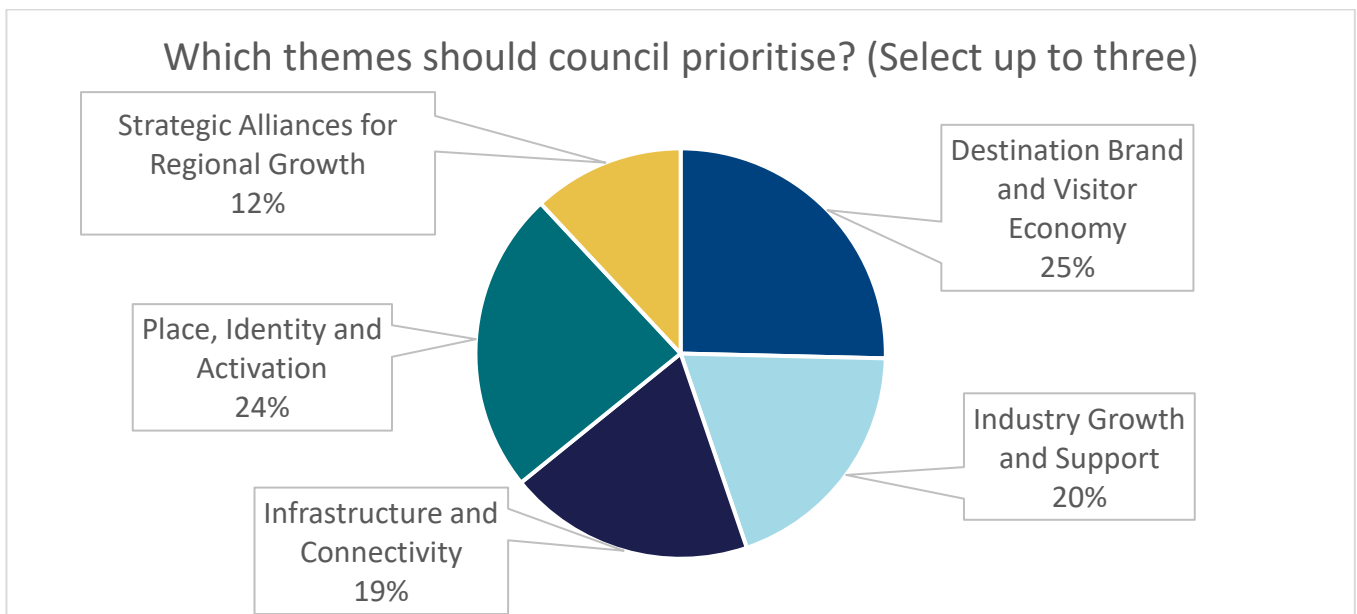


Pop up activity: What matters most for the local economy by 2030?, Total dot votes 1166

Similarly, at the joint webinar, participants were asked which themes council should prioritise in the Economic Development Strategy, out of the following options:

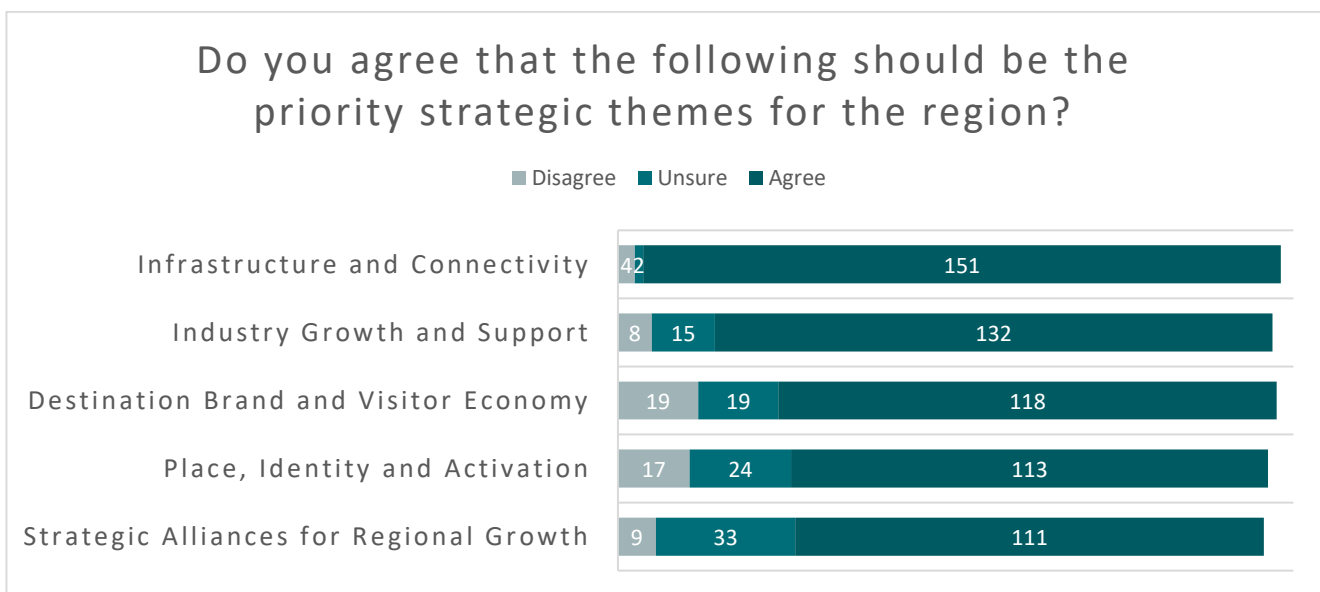
- Destination Brand and Visitor Economy
- Industry Growth and Support
- Infrastructure and Connectivity
- Place, Identity and Activation
- Strategic Alliances for Regional Growth

'Destination Brand and Visitor Economy' (n=25%), and 'Place, Identity and Activation' (n=24%) were the most voted for options, with the others not far behind.



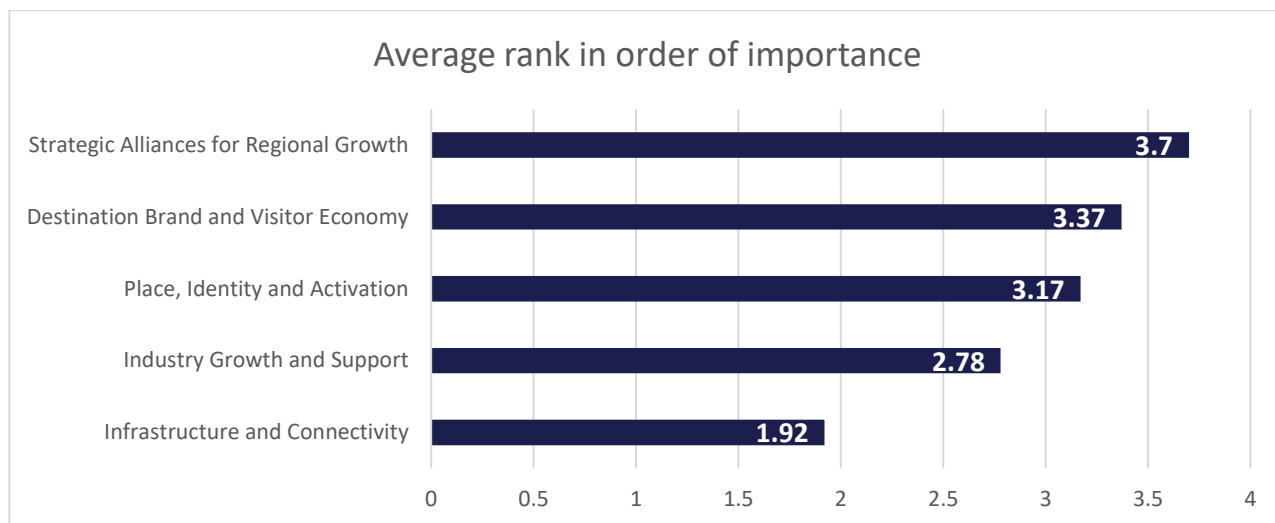
Webinar activity: Which themes should council prioritise? (Select up to three), total votes: 67

Survey respondents were asked if they agreed with the key themes of the strategy, of those that agreed



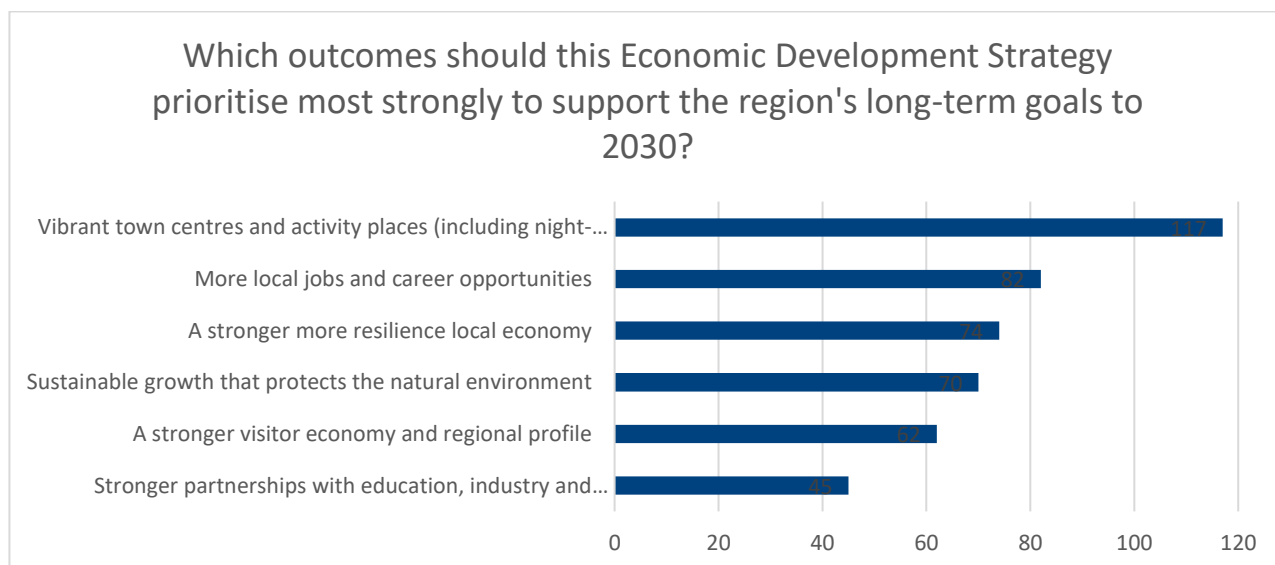
Survey question: Do you agree that the following should be the priority strategic themes for the region?, total responses 158

When asked to rank in order of importance, interestingly the scores almost flipped, telling us that majority of people agree that infrastructure and connectivity should be a priority strategic theme, however, when compared to the other themes it was ranked of lowest importance.



Survey question: Please rank these themes in order of importance, total responses 160

Outcomes of the document



Survey question: Which outcomes should this Economic Development Strategy prioritise most strongly to support the region's long-term goals to 2030?, total responses 160

Of those who had suggestions of improvement when thinking about the economic Development Strategy, their feedback has been summerised below.

Infrastructure and connectivity

Respondents repeatedly raise that economic development will fail unless Council addresses core infrastructure and upkeep, especially:

- Roads, potholes, drainage, kerb & guttering
- Footpaths, shared pathways and basic accessibility
- Public transport connectivity (buses, trains, ferries)
- Parking availability in town centres and visitor areas

The sentiment is consistent:

Economic growth strategies are seen as aspirational and premature while basic infrastructure is visibly deteriorating. This is framed not just as amenity, but as a precondition for business investment, tourism and community confidence.

Transport is raised not as a standalone issue, but as core to economic success, including:

- Better public transport between centres
- Ferries and water-based transport
- Faster and more reliable connections to Sydney
- Better internal connectivity between beach suburbs, town centres and stations

Many respondents explicitly link poor transport with a constrained workforce, tourism and business growth.

Town centre revitalisation and place-based activation

Highly concentrated geographic feedback, repeated calls to prioritise:

- The Entrance (most frequently named place)
- Gosford (CBD, waterfront, vacant buildings)
- Woy Woy and Wyong (secondary but consistent)

Key issues raised:

- Vacant, derelict or fire-damaged buildings
- Poor streetscape presentation and cleanliness
- Lack of active businesses and evening economy
- Perception of neglect compared to Terrigal and Ettalong

Many respondents argue the Strategy should:

- Be more explicit about which centres are priorities
- Commit to visible, early action, not just future plans
- Hold private landowners accountable for derelict sites

A strong and consistent theme, people repeatedly mention that:

- The Coast “looks uncared for”
- Weeds, graffiti, unkempt verges and dirty public areas undermine:
- Tourism
- Local pride
- Business confidence

This is framed as a low-cost, high-impact economic lever, not just aesthetics.

Implementation and accountability

A trust and credibility issue. From the survey responses there is a strong undercurrent of frustration that:

- The Strategy is well-written but vague

- Too much emphasis is placed on studies, frameworks and future plans
- Past strategies were not delivered or measured

Common suggestions:

- Clear, time-bound actions
- Public reporting on delivery
- Fewer “themes” and more specific commitments
- Early “quick wins” to demonstrate momentum

This is less about opposition to the Strategy and more about implementation confidence.

Tangible and deliverable outcomes for local businesses

Respondents consistently want the Strategy to do more to:

- Reduce red tape and approval delays
- Support local businesses over external operators, particularly at events
- Encourage business retention, not just attraction
- Support micro and small businesses with:
 - Mentoring
 - Access to Council events
 - Fairer treatment in town centres

There is a clear expectation that economic development should keep money circulating locally, not just attract activity.

Environmental sustainability

While many support sustainable growth, feedback suggests the Strategy should:

- Move beyond high-level statements
- Better protect bushland, waterways and beaches
- Link environmental maintenance directly to:
 - Tourism value
 - Liveability
 - Long-term economic resilience

Sustainable tourism and liveability

Respondents raised the important balance of tourism and liveability. Suggestions include:

- Focusing on quality and off-peak visitors
- Avoiding over-tourism in already stressed areas
- Ensuring tourism investment benefits locals first
- Not relying on events and marketing alone to “fix” places

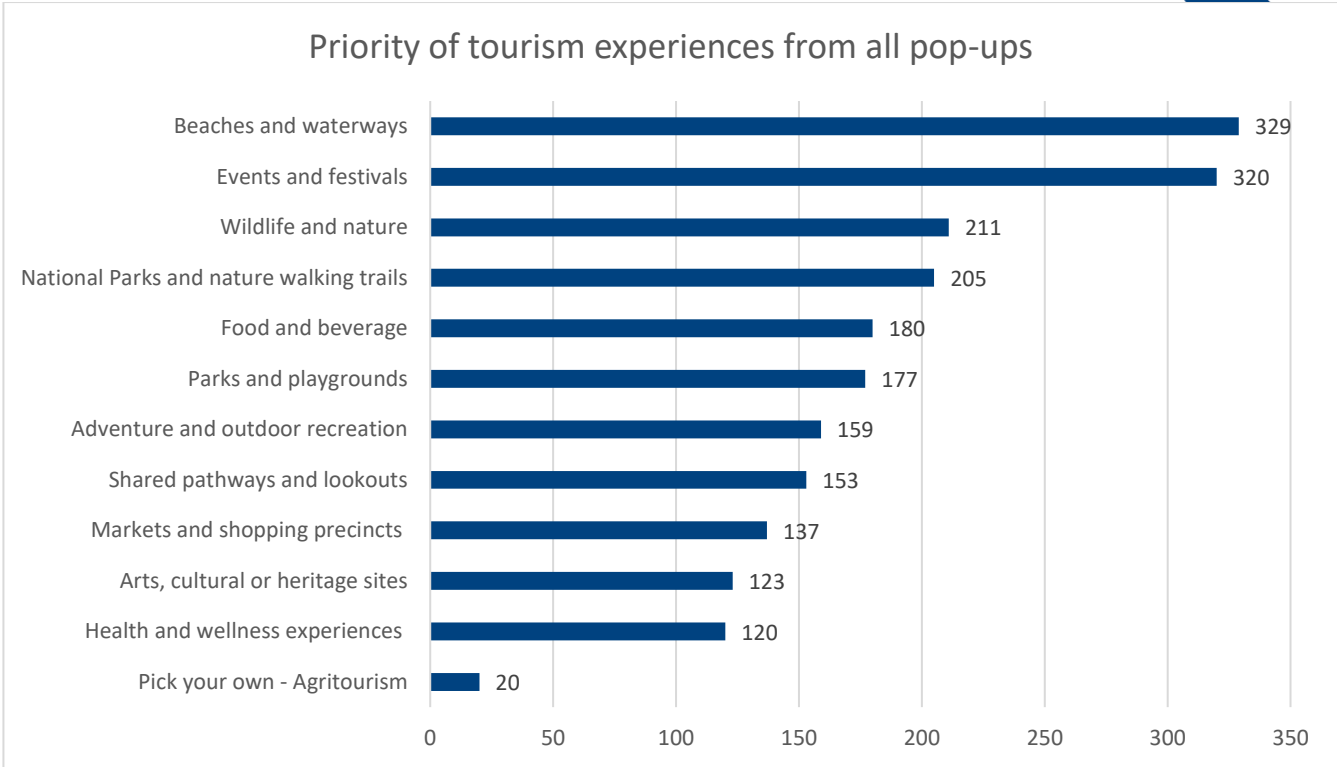
There is support for tourism, but where it improves everyday life for residents.

Destination Management Plan

When asked which kinds of tourism experiences should be prioritised for the region, the community could choose from various options, as presented in the poster below. This poster was from the Wyong pop-up, and represents the large support for beaches and waterways, and events and festivals.

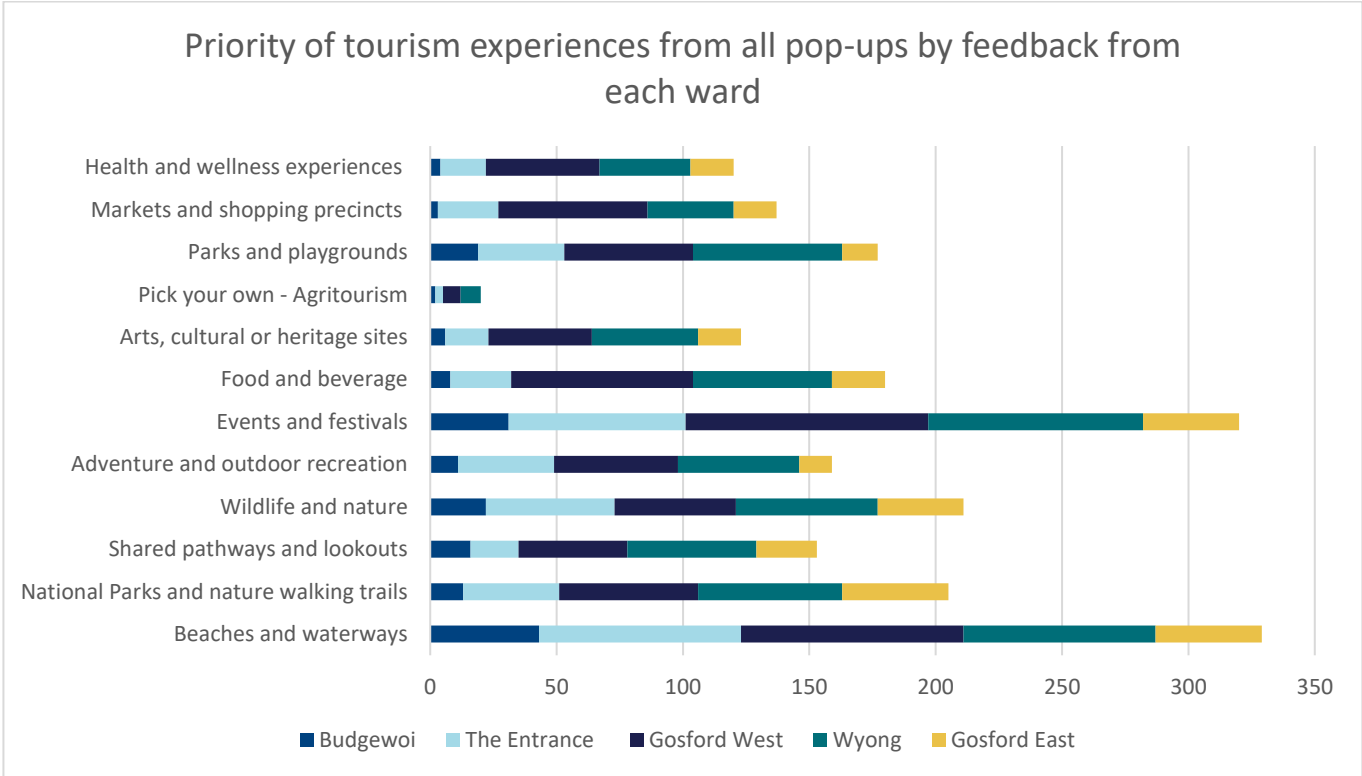


Pop up activity board example from Wyong Pop-up event: Which kinds of tourism experiences should be prioritised for the region.



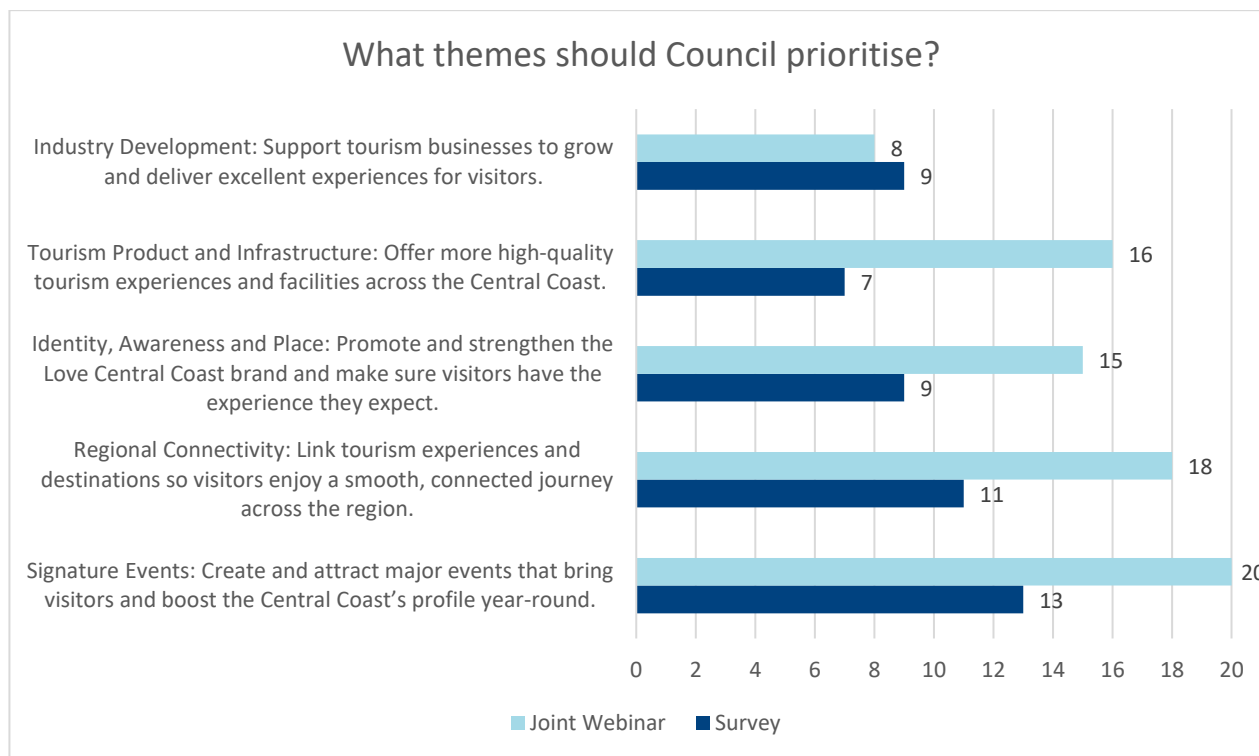
Pop up activity: Which kinds of tourism experiences should be prioritised for the region, total pop-up board voting dots 2134

Overall, the pop ups, the total number of sticky dots added up to show the different priorities of tourism experiences by ward, as shown below.



Pop up activity: Which kinds of tourism experiences should be prioritised for the region, data split by each ward-based pop-up data, total pop-up board voting dots 2134

When asked what themes council should prioritise, the following themes were voted on by those completing the survey, and those who attended the webinar, the most voted for theme was signature events, followed by regional connectivity.



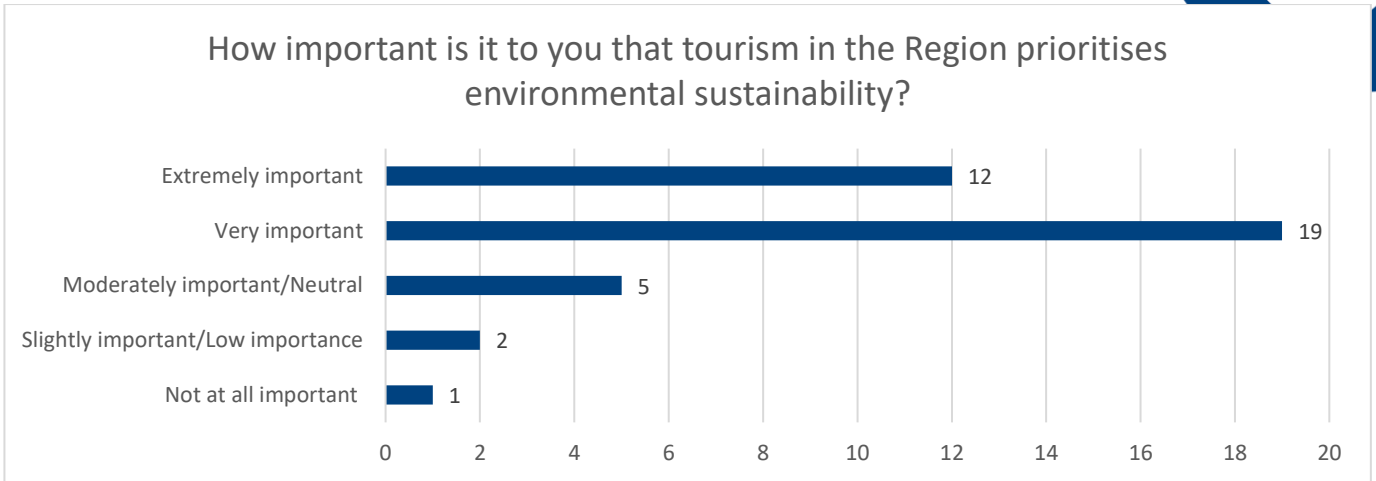
Joint Webinar and Survey question: What themes should Council prioritise?, total responses 126

The overall feedback on the Destination management plan includes the following themes.

Environmental sustainability

Community feedback strongly emphasised the Central Coast's natural environment as its greatest point of difference and most valuable tourism asset. Respondents consistently noted that environmental maintenance, protection and restoration must be prioritised before any tourism promotion. There was strong support for ecotourism centred on clean air and water, beaches and bushland, with the region's 'untouched beauty' seen as its key drawcard. Submissions also called for stronger protection of native bushland and wildlife habitats, including addressing damage caused by trail bikes and mountain bikes in environmentally sensitive areas.

From both the joint webinar and the online survey, respondents indicated the importance that tourism in the region prioritises environmental sustainability, by majority voting that it was either very or extremely important, see below. Environmental sustainability matters to a lot of respondents, who provided feedback asking for ecotourism, clean air, water, beaches, bushland, and stronger environmental protection/management settings.



Joint Webinar and Survey question: How important is it to you that tourism in the Region prioritises environmental sustainability?, total responses 39

Importance of presentation and maintenance

A strong thread in the written feedback is don't try to "promote" the Coast if public spaces and streetscapes look neglected. People explicitly called out mowing, weeds, medians, roundabouts, gutters, and compared the Coast unfavourably with other LGAs on day-to-day upkeep. At least one response is blunt: "You can't promote tourism when our waterways are disgusting" and calls for clean-up before promotion. This theme often sits underneath other priorities: visitors may come anyway, but pride, first impressions, and repeat visitation depend on visible basics being done well.

Additionally, tourism operators/residents raised placemaking and town amenity improvements, referring to pride of place operational suggestions. These respondents indicated that peak-season waste servicing (e.g., recycling frequency) and FOGO expectations/rollout are "no brainers" given visitor volumes and holiday rental patterns.

Seasonality / off-peak focus

Some respondents explicitly noted that on-peak demand is already strong and suggested Council should strengthen focus on off-peak markets (e.g., older visitors, corporate visitors) to help with business viability and support a stronger night-time / year-round economy.

Accommodation pressure

Some respondents want stronger action on short-stay accommodation, explicitly calling for restrictions on whole-home Airbnb and a shift toward "real accommodation" supply (hotels/motels/caravan parks). This is less about marketing and more about destination liveability and housing/community impacts.

Surf culture opportunity

A notable written comment highlights surf culture as an underused differentiator, pointing to the potential to position the region as a recognised surf destination (with local surf ambassadors mentioned). This sits in the broader identity theme: people are looking for clearer points of difference and stronger destination story.

Arts and culture opportunities

A respondent noted that performing arts weren't mentioned enough and referenced Council-owned facilities (and constraints like parking), plus interest in more live performance in venues and stronger

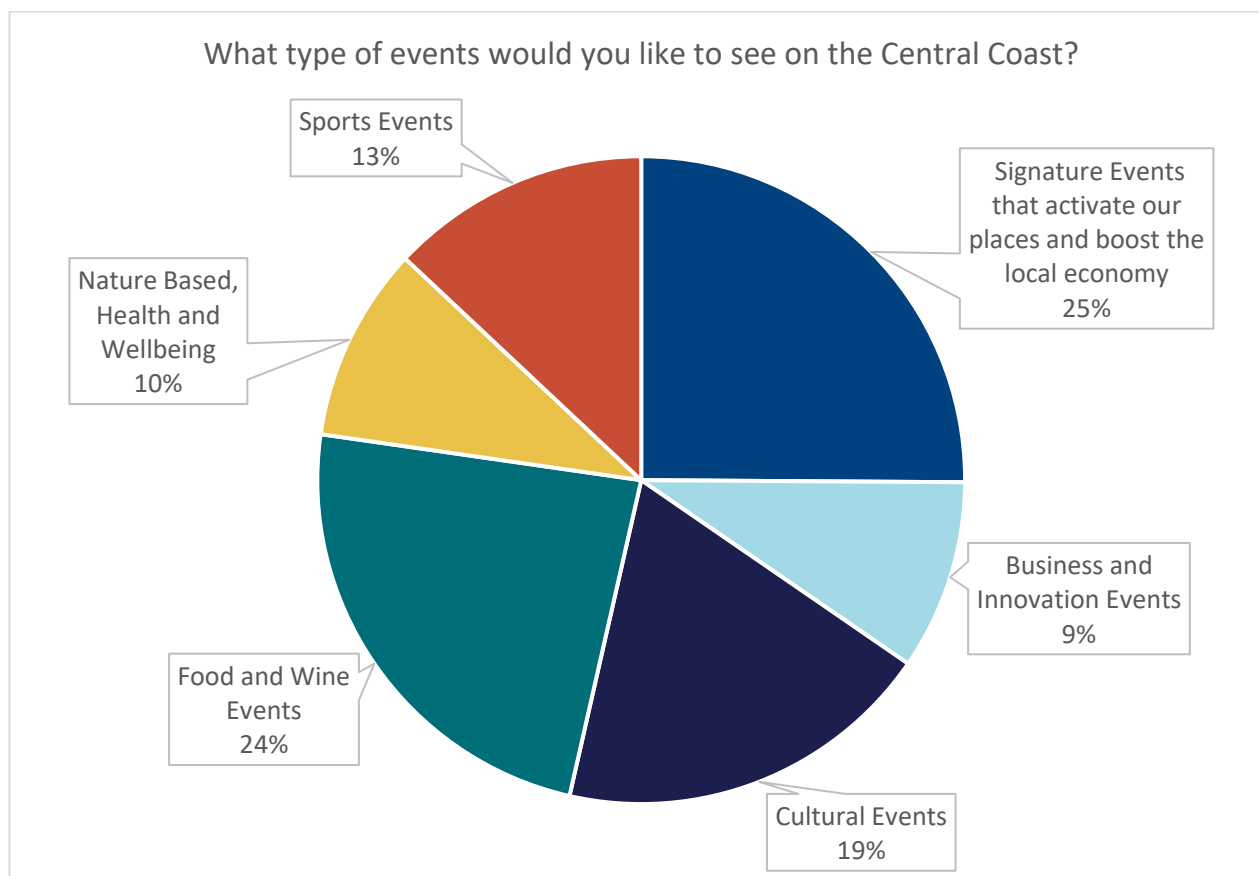
event experiences. This complements the strong overall support for Signature Events but adds nuance: not just “more events”, but better-programmed, more compelling cultural opportunities.

Delivery partnerships

A practical implementation theme appears in comments asking for stronger Council resourcing, and stronger connections with external tourism bodies to lift exposure and delivery.

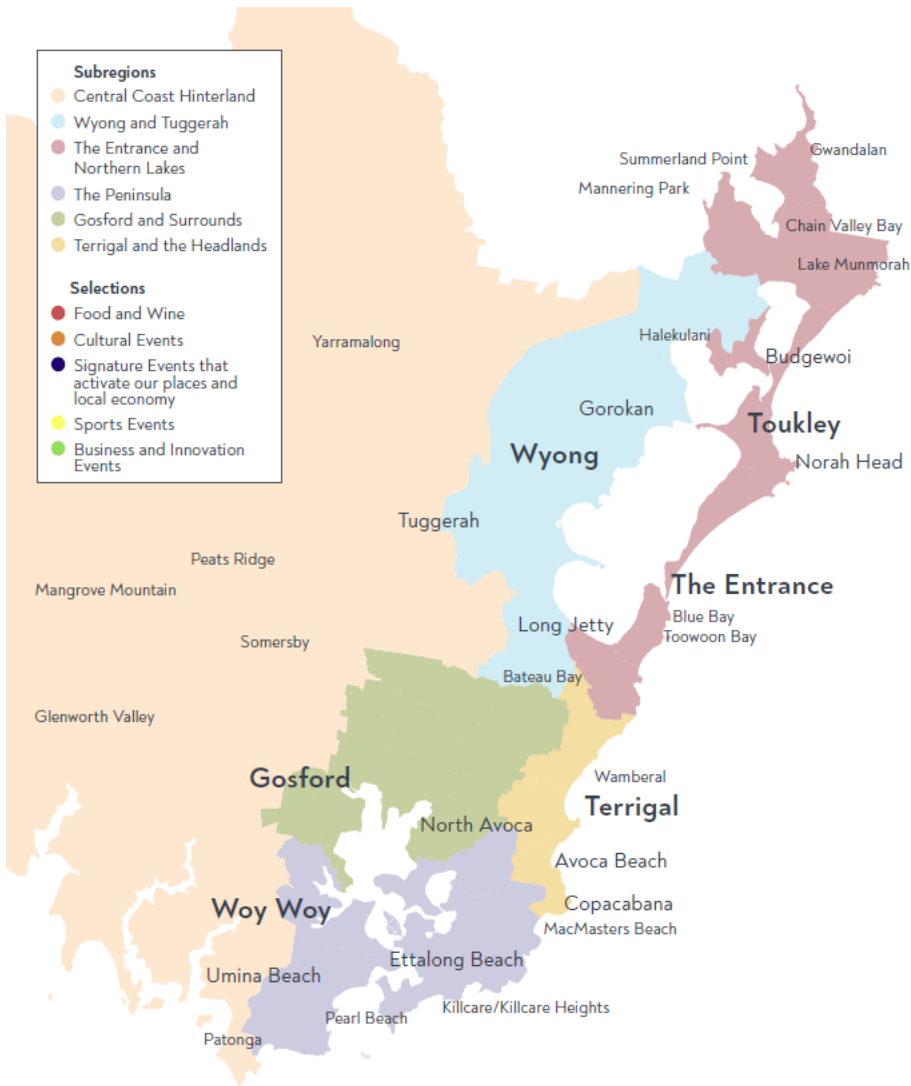
Events Strategy

All participants were asked what type of events they would like to see on the Central Coast. Of all the feedback from the joint webinar, the events industry specific webinar, all five of the pop-ups, and the online map, we had 1,223 votes for the different types of events. Of those votes, the type of event with the most votes are ‘Signature Events that activate our places and boost the local economy’ with 307 votes (25%), closely followed by ‘Food and wine events’ with 290 votes (24%).



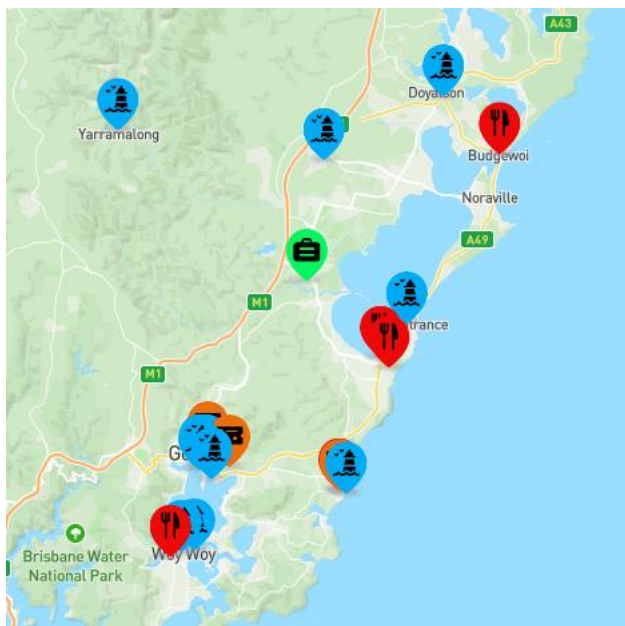
Webinars, pop-ups, online map question: What type of events would you like to see on the Central Coast?, Combined data from the joint webinar, the events industry specific webinar, all five of the pop-ups, and the online map, total of 1,223 votes.

When asked where participants would like to see events on the Central Coast, the most frequently mentioned sub-regions across all methods of engagement were Gosford and surrounds (26%), The Entrance and Northern Lakes (25%) and Wyong and Tuggerah (20%). Less frequently mentioned was Terrigal and the headlands (12%), the Peninsula (10%), and Central Coast Hinterland (7%).



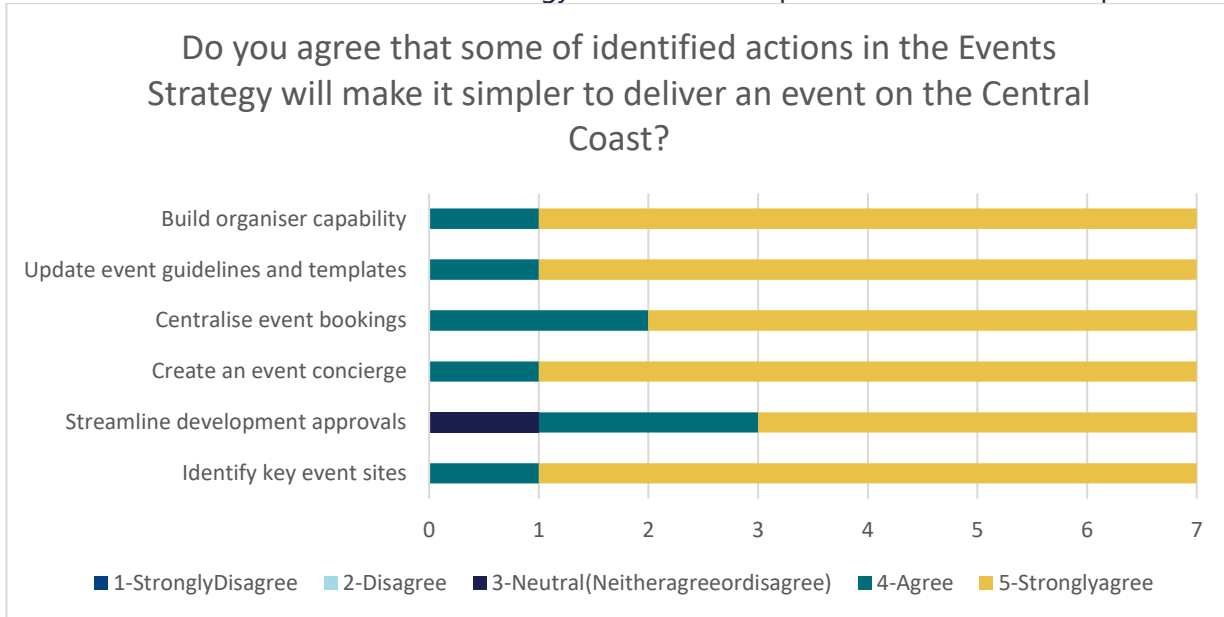
Map of regions shown to attendees at pop-ups.

Those who put a pin on the social map online, were able to select what type of event, and pin where they would like to see it on the Central Coast map.



Online Social Map, Where would you like to see events on the Central Coast? total of 20 pins

When we engaged with event organisers, there was an overwhelming amount of support for the identified actions within the Events Strategy will make it simpler to deliver events, as presented below.



Online survey question, Do you agree that some of identified actions in the Events Strategy will make it simpler to deliver an event on the Central Coast?, total responses = 7

Key feedback from event organisers includes the following key themes:

Reducing compliance and streamlining processes

- Strong desire to make business happen with less red tape, particularly around approvals and compliance.
- Calls for a centralised or “one stop shop” approach for small to medium events to simplify processes and reduce administrative burden.
- Recognition that larger events require additional resourcing, but smaller organisers need proportionate requirements.

Stronger industry and business engagement

- Ongoing need to maintain and grow industry buy-in for events.
- Events should be planned with existing local businesses in mind, not at their expense.
- Feedback highlights frustration where events (e.g. markets) can divert customers away from established businesses, rather than supporting them.
- Clear appetite for collaboration between council, organisers and businesses to drive long-term economic benefit.

Supporting local and not-for-profit events

Desire for more support for local NFP and grassroots events, recognising their community value. These events are seen as important for local pride, participation and place-based identity, but often lack resources.

Event location, impact and place activation

Concern about event impacts on public spaces, including parks, maintenance, rubbish and overuse. Specific examples (e.g. markets at The Entrance) highlight how current locations can:

- Pull foot traffic away from main retail precincts

- Create additional maintenance costs borne by ratepayers

Strong suggestion that events should be better integrated into town centres and shopping streets to support local traders.

Events should activate landmarks and key attractions, reinforcing pride in place and distinct local identities.

Gaps in event programming – modern music and youth audiences

Significant concern that the Central Coast lacks contemporary music and cultural events, particularly for:

- Youth
- Young adults
- People in their 20s, 30s and 40s

Current programming perceived as skewed towards older demographics, with repeated themes (e.g. 60s, rockabilly, country). Strong feedback that modern music tastes are not being catered for, leading to disengagement from events.

Comparison with Sydney highlights:

- The success of free, all-ages modern music events
- Strong economic and social benefits, including high energy, inclusivity and increased local spending

Clear aspiration to bring similar contemporary, high-energy events to the Central Coast.

Events as Economic and Cultural Drivers

Events are seen as a powerful way to:

- Drive local economic activity
- Increase visitation and spending
- Build positive energy, vibrancy and community connection

Feedback reinforces that well-designed, inclusive events benefit both community and economy when aligned with local needs and audiences.

Council's responses

Below outlines Council's responses to the key themes identified through consultation on each strategy and the resulting amendments. All submissions received during the exhibition period were reviewed and considered, with feedback incorporated to improve clarity and strengthen the final Strategies and Plans, informed by both evidence-based planning and community insights.

Theme	Summary of theme / example of comment	Council's response
<p>Fix the basics first: infrastructure, maintenance and presentation</p>	<p>Feedback stressed that basic infrastructure, maintenance and presentation must be fixed before promotion, with neglected public spaces, transport and upkeep undermining pride, visitor confidence and economic growth. Respondents consistently viewed roads, accessibility, transport, parking and waste services as essential foundations for tourism, business investment and town centre vitality.</p>	<p>Council acknowledges that well-maintained infrastructure and public spaces are essential foundations for economic growth, tourism and community confidence.</p> <p>In response to feedback, all three strategies reinforce the importance of fixing the basics alongside promotion, recognising that transport, accessibility, parking, waste services and the presentation of town centres directly influence liveability, visitor experience and business investment.</p> <p>The Economic Development Strategy Action Plan prioritises place-based outcomes and coordinated delivery across Council to support town centre vitality, while the Destination Management Plan and Events Strategy emphasise events-led activation that is supported by appropriate servicing, maintenance and amenity. Together, these strategies focus on improving the everyday experience for locals and visitors by aligning promotion with visible, on-the-ground improvements.</p>
<p>Move from high-level strategy to delivery and accountability</p>	<p>Feedback called for clearer, practical and achievable economic outcomes, with transparent and accountable delivery, and more consistent, trusted Council processes, language and risk</p>	<p>The Economic Development Strategy outcomes were refined to focus on clear, deliverable economic results, with defined measures of success and a four-year Action Plan to strengthen</p>

Theme	Summary of theme / example of comment	Council's response
	<p>management to demonstrate real impact.</p>	<p>transparency, accountability and long-term delivery.</p> <p>Council also acknowledged feedback on the need for clearer processes, stronger safety considerations, and greater confidence in sustainability and risk management, particularly for events. The Events Strategy provides a consistent, whole-of-Council governance framework to improve alignment, reduce duplication and support balanced, transparent decision-making.</p>
<p>Revitalising town centres with clear geographic focus, strong identity, local pride and a sense of place</p>	<p>Feedback emphasised the need to revitalise local town centres to support economic activity, vibrancy and growth, with a focus on connected, activated and safer places, including stronger night-time environments and visitor journeys. Submissions highlighted Gosford and The Entrance as priority locations, recognised the distinct character of areas such as the Peninsula and hinterland, and stressed the importance of supporting local businesses, place-based activation and events that balance visitor attraction with local amenity.</p>	<p>Outcome wording was refined to strengthen place-based economic development and town centre revitalisation, with supporting actions already included in the Economic Development Strategy Action Plan.</p> <p>The Economic Development Strategy and Destination Management Plan prioritise town centre activation, events-led placemaking, connectivity and visitor journeys, with feedback reinforcing the importance of visible progress in centres such as Gosford and The Entrance. The Destination Management Plan strengthens destination messaging across six visitor regions and supports agritourism, ecotourism and regenerative tourism, particularly in hinterland areas.</p> <p>Events are recognised as critical to supporting local businesses and jobs, with Council applying an 80/20 local procurement approach and protections to ensure events complement, rather than compete</p>

Theme	Summary of theme / example of comment	Council's response
		with, town centre traders, when events are located within a town centre.
<p>Stronger, more practical support for local businesses</p>	<p>Submissions supported strengthening the evening and night-time economy through safer, more vibrant centres with hospitality, arts and cultural activity, while also calling for clearer, more consistent and trusted Council processes and risk management.</p>	<p>The Destination Management Plan already includes an action to support visitor economy initiatives identified within the Night-Time Economy Discussion Paper, which focuses on strengthening evening activation and experiences across key centres.</p> <p>Council acknowledges feedback calling for clearer, more consistent processes and stronger governance to improve safety, sustainability, risk management and transparent event delivery across Council.</p> <p>The Events Strategy is intended to provide a consistent, whole-of-Council framework that improves alignment between internal teams, reduces duplication, and supports more informed and transparent decision-making.</p>
<p>Transport and connectivity as economic enablers</p>	<p>Feedback identified infrastructure and connectivity as key enablers of economic growth, investment and access to employment opportunities.</p>	<p>Infrastructure and connectivity strengthened across Strategy outcomes aligned with delivery actions identified in the Economic Development Strategy Action Plan.</p>
<p>Balance tourism growth with liveability</p>	<p>Overall, the community supports tourism growth where it benefits locals, protects the natural environment, and improves everyday liveability. Respondents cautioned against over-tourism, particularly in already stressed areas, and called for a focus on quality and off-peak visitation rather than volume.</p> <p>Submissions called for better management of short-stay</p>	<p>Council recognises community support for tourism growth that benefits local residents, protects the natural environment and enhances everyday liveability. Council also acknowledges feedback regarding the need to manage visitation pressures in already popular locations. The Destination Management Plan already adopts a sustainable, yield-focused approach to growing the visitor economy, including actions that support</p>

Theme	Summary of theme / example of comment	Council's response
	<p>accommodation to protect housing and community character, alongside opportunities to diversify accommodation through nature-based, experiential and wellness stays that support longer visits.</p>	<p>visitor dispersal across the region, encourage off-peak travel and strengthen nature-based and responsible tourism experiences.</p> <p>A future Central Coast Visitor Accommodation Investment campaign is considered in the Economic Development Strategy. This includes facilitating investment in both new and ageing accommodation product to better meet the needs of the Central Coast visitor market.</p>
<p>Modern, inclusive and better-balanced event programming</p>	<p>Submissions highlighted the importance of celebrating the Central Coast's cultural identity and heritage through stronger local storytelling, while supporting modern events that appeal across generations and cultures.</p>	<p>In response to feedback, new actions were added to the Destination Management Plan to strengthen the promotion of heritage experiences and local storytelling across the Central Coast, while submissions also called for a broader, more contemporary and diverse events program.</p> <p>The Events Strategy supports a balanced and innovative event mix that appeals to different demographics, attracts regionally significant events, and encourages collaboration with local arts, cultural groups and storytellers.</p>
<p>Environmental sustainability</p>	<p>Feedback emphasised the Central Coast's natural environment as a key asset for liveability, visitation and economic growth, calling for tourism development that aligns with environmental values, sustainability, climate resilience and the protection and promotion of natural and ecotourism assets.</p>	<p>The Economic Development Strategy wording was updated to strengthen environmental values and alignment with the Destination Management Plan and Events Strategy, recognising that natural assets are safeguarded, enhance and celebrated by the community, businesses and visitors.</p> <p>The Destination Management plan supports sustainable tourism practices and the promotion of nature-based experiences while</p>

Theme	Summary of theme / example of comment	Council's response
		<p>aligning with Council's wider environmental and sustainability initiatives.</p> <p>Ecosystem was removed from the Events Strategy and replaced with sector.</p>

What's next?

Council is reviewing your feedback and will incorporate it into each respective strategy and plan. Any updates on this project will be published on the Your Voice Our Coast page linked below.

Find out more and stay up to date at

www.yourvoiceourcoast.com/strengthening-our-regional-economy

March 2026