



Visitor boom prompts campaign at 'bucket list' iconic site

Re: Media Release Need for Visitor Information Centre and Kiosk

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[Visitor boom prompts campaign at 'bucket list' iconic site](#) It's a iconic and picturesque area known to Port Stephens which is visited by thousands every year, but the lack of information and signage seems to be an ongoing issue. Here's what the locals want to do. - [Search \(bing.com\)](#)



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From beautiful beaches, stunning sand dunes and breathtaking coastal walks, Port Stephens is crawling with natural beauty and has become a wealth of 'bucket-list' experiences for thousands of visitors each year.

This holiday season things are only getting busier for local tourism operators in the coastal Hunter region, who have reported a bumper season like no other.

"Busiest summer I have ever experienced 30 years on the water," Port Stephens business operator and local conservationists Frank Future said.

"A mellow summer has seen thousands of people here, and after Covid and troubles in Europe, people are coming here in droves.

"The airport opening up international flights is only going to increase tourism."

Destination Port Stephens has been working hard to boost visitation to the region, through elaborate promotion campaigns and using social media collaborations to spruik how amazing the area is.

CEO Stephen Keogh confirmed Sydney is very much its focus in driving visitor numbers to the region.

"We know that the imagery we generate is really popular with the Sydney audience," he said.

"95 per cent NSW audience, and we'd love to see more coming through the airport which will be a focus of ours in the next year or two but primarily maintaining our core markets in Sydney driving people to come."

But while business is booming for local operators, and off the back of the opening of the almost \$7 million 27 kilometre Tomaree Coastal Walk late last year, Mr Future said they have to ensure all those who do visit are looked after and infrastructure and facilities are up to scratch to cater for increased numbers.

Specifically at the iconic and picturesque Tomaree Headland, a unique and primary asset for Port Stephens, *which is lacking signage, information for tourists and has parking and traffic issues.*

"No real information and it would be great to have a facility where we can at least tell people what there is," Mr Future added.

Volunteers set up a help desk at the Tomaree Headland before and after Christmas, some of the busiest periods, and a number 'clicker' to discover upwards of 350 visitors per hour who visit the Headland, Coastal Walk and Tomaree Lodge Foreshore.

It's estimated that numbers are approaching 250,000 per year at the iconic site, which is well in advance of the last recorded numbers of 200,000 during 2018 by National Parks and Wildlife.

As expected, hundreds of questions and comments came about the future of the Tomaree Lodge, which is an ongoing issue, but it was also found the key issues raised there were significant **lack of parking and traffic, inadequate signage and 'no sense of arrival'** and a need for information about the summit and coastal walks.

That has prompted a call for a new information centre and kiosk to be built to cater for that increased visitation.

"It's still the most popular visitor attraction in Port Stephens, and the amount of enquiry to get to the Tomaree Headland," President of the Tomaree Headland Heritage Group Peter Clough said.

"We should have some information service out there and a kiosk with food and beverage after a walk and overlook the bay makes a heap of sense.

"Maybe do a deal with a commercial operator to generate an income and in turn provide a level of information to visitors."

Group member Maggie Jakeman, who was part of the recent help desk team, agrees there just needs to be a bit of sensible and basic information offered.

"There is no signage anything about the Headland or the walks around the foreshore in Shoal Bay or around Nelson Bay, nothing to tell you it is **a dead end road to Tomaree**," she said.

"We were handing out coastal maps but it does seem to need some sort of coordination.

"One day between 9am and 12pm we had 600 people go up to the headland, not counting the people just going around the foreshore."

The Heritage Groups main fight has been to get the Tomaree Lodge site reopened and refurbished into a marine training facility and possible museum, after it closed more than two years ago and has been left stagnant by the State Government.

But there has been little wins in opening up a toilet block for visitors to Tomaree Headland to use, and Port Stephens Council agreeing late last year to take on a "leadership" role in the future of the site.

The push now for a new information centre and kiosk is another task in ensuring the Tomaree Headland can cater for increased annual numbers.

"If you're going to get a whole lot more people to your region, there's going to be consequences, that could be parking, traffic, signage, whole range of things, someone has to address them," Mr Clough explained.

"As far as we know no one is managing that."

While it may not be the main priority of Destination Port Stephens to address issues following increased numbers coming in, Mr Keogh admits there is merit in supporting local operators to have their concerns heard.

"Tomaree coastal walk is a brilliant asset for us. Anything that helps our visitors is a good thing, we work quite closely with National Parks and Wildlife as it is, so will be very interesting to hear their thoughts," he added.

"We do our best to support our operators. We have a role to play in that space and help out as much as we can to make them aware of the value of tourism to the region and also issues that might be confronting operators."

A spokesperson from the Department of Communities and Justice said it was "exploring a number of different avenues for the future use of the Tomaree Lodge site, in line with previous commitments made by the government and the stakeholder engagement process" but said questions regarding the Tomaree Coastal Walk should be directed to NSW National Parks and Wildlife, which has been contacted for comment.