

Sunshine Coast
Major Events Strategy
2018-2027





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Acknowledgements

Council wishes to thank all contributors and stakeholders involved in the development of this document.

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Contents

Foreword 5

Introduction 7

Vision 2027 8

Mission 8

Goals 8

Pathways 8

Measures of success 9

Background 10

Major events on the Sunshine Coast – progress since 2012 10

Key achievements 11

Strategic framework 12

Current event landscape on the Sunshine Coast 14

Best practice – what attributes are typically found in a successful major events destination? 15

The Sunshine Coast's competitive advantage – our tourism and major event destination 'brand' 16

Vision and targets 22

Pathways to success 24

Pathway 1 - Maximising results through showcasing the region's strengths 26

Pathway 2 - Maximising results through spreading the word 28

Pathway 3 - Maximising results through driving maximum return 30

Pathway 4 - Maximising results through being a best practice region 32

Pathway 5 - Maximising results through creating industry demand 34

Pathway 6 - Maximising results through engaging with communities 36

Conclusion and Next Steps 38

Appendix one - Consolidated list of actions 40

Appendix two - Alignment with existing policy frameworks 42



Foreword

The Sunshine Coast is one of Australia's premier tourism and event destinations, attracting 9.8 million visitors in 2016-2017.

The region's major events portfolio has grown significantly over the past decade - achieving notable successes and making a significant contribution to Council's vision for the Sunshine Coast to be *Australia's most sustainable region - healthy, smart and creative*.

Council's sponsorship, nurturing and support for major events over the five-year period of the previous *Sunshine Coast Major and Regional Events Strategy 2013-2017* generated an economic benefit of more than \$342 million at an average Return on Investment (ROI) of over 1:30, and supported 3,830 Full Time Equivalent jobs (FTE).

Leadership provided by the Sunshine Coast Council and the Sunshine Coast Events Board, combined with strong community support and industry participation, has enabled the region to forge a well-earned reputation as a leading Australian major event destination. These past successes enable all stakeholders to plan for the future from a position of strength.

However, it is recognised that the Sunshine Coast operates in a highly competitive environment, and renewed action is required to ensure that value from major events is fully captured.

Carefully targeted financial support, high quality events and support infrastructure, engaged business and resident communities and ensuring that the branding and promotional benefits of events are fully realised, all play important roles in leveraging the benefits that can be created for the region.

The *2018-2027 Sunshine Coast Major Events Strategy* also places a renewed focus on the longer-term outcomes and benefits from successful event funding programs. The immediate economic and visitation impact of events will always be a prime measure of success for each project, however, moving forward an increase in the branding, promotional and destination awareness potential of the events program will be further targeted.

This Strategy sets a framework which will deliver the vision of the Sunshine Coast being recognised as the ***premier regional events destination in Australia - where major events deliver maximum results*** to the economy, communities and stakeholders.

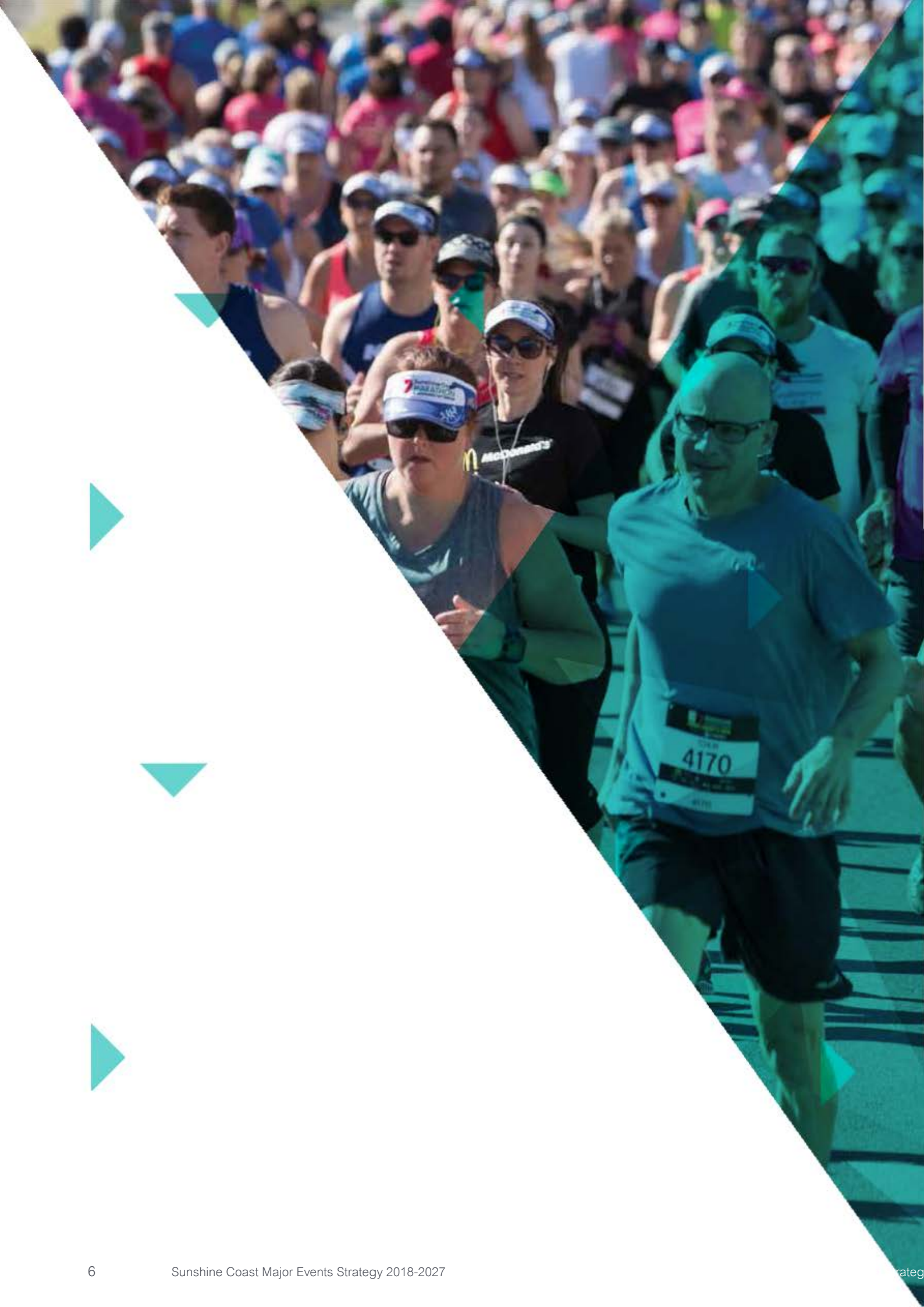
The vision will be achieved through continued productive relationships with partners in the tourism and events industry, and with local businesses and communities to ensure all the benefits of a vibrant event calendar for the region are fully realised.



Sunshine Coast
Mayor Mark Jamieson



Sunshine Coast
Events Board Chair
Ralph Devlin AM QC



Introduction

The Sunshine Coast: where major events deliver maximum results.

The *Sunshine Coast Major Events Strategy 2018-2027* provides a ten-year framework which seeks to maximise the value of major events to the economy and to the region. The Strategy has been developed by Council in close consultation with the Sunshine Coast Events Board and informed through valuable contributions from the tourism and event industry and key regional partners. The document outlines pathways and actions for the first three-year period of the Strategy, prior to a formal review in 2021.

The Strategy outlines the region's approach to the acquisition, support and assessment of the annual calendar of Sunshine Coast major event products that drive visitation and economic benefit, and is designed to build on the foundations of success established through the previous *Sunshine Coast Major and Regional Events Strategy 2013-2017*. It is also designed to align with and contribute to the desired outcomes of the *Sunshine Coast Regional Economic Development Strategy 2013-2033*, and to assist Council in achieving the broader regional and community objectives envisioned in the *Sunshine Coast Council Corporate Plan 2018-2022*. The major event program has a vital role to play in the overall tourism strategy for the region, with events being key drivers of visitation, promotion of the destination and long-term brand development of the Sunshine Coast.

This Strategy therefore operates in conjunction with Visit Sunshine Coast's *Destination Tourism Plan 2013-2020* and its vision to create a sustainable and competitive tourism and events destination. Actions and measures relating to the immediate and longer-term impact of major events on the overall tourism performance of the region form key parts of this Strategy, reflecting the contribution a successful major events program makes to broader regional tourism outcomes.

The events and projects referred to in this document are those supported by Council through the Major Events Sponsorship Program. It is acknowledged that a wide range of other event projects are delivered throughout the region that contribute significantly to the achievement of the overall goals of this Strategy, and it is intended that the actions and outputs of this plan work closely with other key regional plans with mutually beneficial goals, the *Sunshine Coast Arts Plan* (in development), the *Sunshine Coast Environment and Liveability Strategy 2017*, the *Sunshine Coast Social Strategy 2015*, the Sunshine Coast Tourism Region, *Destination Tourism Plan 2013-2020* and Tourism and Events Queensland's *Events Strategy 2025*. (See Appendix 2 for full details of related strategies and plans).

Vision 2027

The Strategy seeks to ensure the region realises its full potential, ensuring that major events contribute fully to the vision for the Sunshine Coast region to be *Australia's most sustainable region - healthy, smart and creative*.

Council's vision for the Sunshine Coast Major Events Strategy 2018-2027 is for the region to be recognised as the *premier regional events destination in Australia - where major events deliver maximum results*.

Mission

To attract, support and grow a diverse calendar of events that promote the region, drive visitation and create lasting benefits for Sunshine Coast businesses and the community.

Goals

The Sunshine Coast is one of Australia's most desirable tourism and event regions, renowned for its natural attributes and high-quality tourism experiences.

The Major Events Sponsorship Program delivers for the region by attracting, supporting and leveraging events that:

- 1 Maximise direct economic return to the region
- 2 Showcase the Sunshine Coast as a destination and increase the region's appeal to potential visitors
- 3 Use the audience reach of major events to promote the Sunshine Coast within target audiences
- 4 Spread the impacts and benefits as widely as possible across the region and the calendar year
- 5 Promote and engage the region's high value industries, and
- 6 Are in keeping with Sunshine Coast community values and Council's vision to be healthy, smart and creative.

Pathways

To achieve the outlined mission and goals, the region will pursue six priority pathways:

- 1 **Showcase the region's strengths:** Continue the development of the Sunshine Coast destination brand, using major events to showcase the full range of the region's natural, physical and community assets
- 2 **Spreading the word:** Use the media, digital, influencer and broadcast potential of major events to increase the audience reach and awareness of the Sunshine Coast destination brand
- 3 **Drive maximum return:** Implement specific leveraging strategies to increase the benefits derived from individual events
- 4 **Best practice region:** Be a leader in process and governance, sponsorship selection, and in support and leverage for major event projects
- 5 **Create industry demand:** Grow the profile of the Sunshine Coast as a highly desirable host destination for the event industry, and
- 6 **Engage the community:** Drive continued business and community support through promotion of the outcomes and benefits from the region's hosting of major events.

Measures of success

A series of key performance indicators will be used to measure the impact of the region's investment and support programs. By 2027, major events will deliver:

2018

Direct economic impact from the major events program averages \$70m per annum

2027

Direct economic impact from the major events program averages \$105m per annum

Major event projects have an audience reach of 16 million views

Major event projects have an audience reach of 40 million views

Sunshine Coast destination preference at 5.7%*

Sunshine Coast destination preference at 6.8% (20% increase from 2018 level)

38 event proposals considered in 2017 by Sunshine Coast Events Board

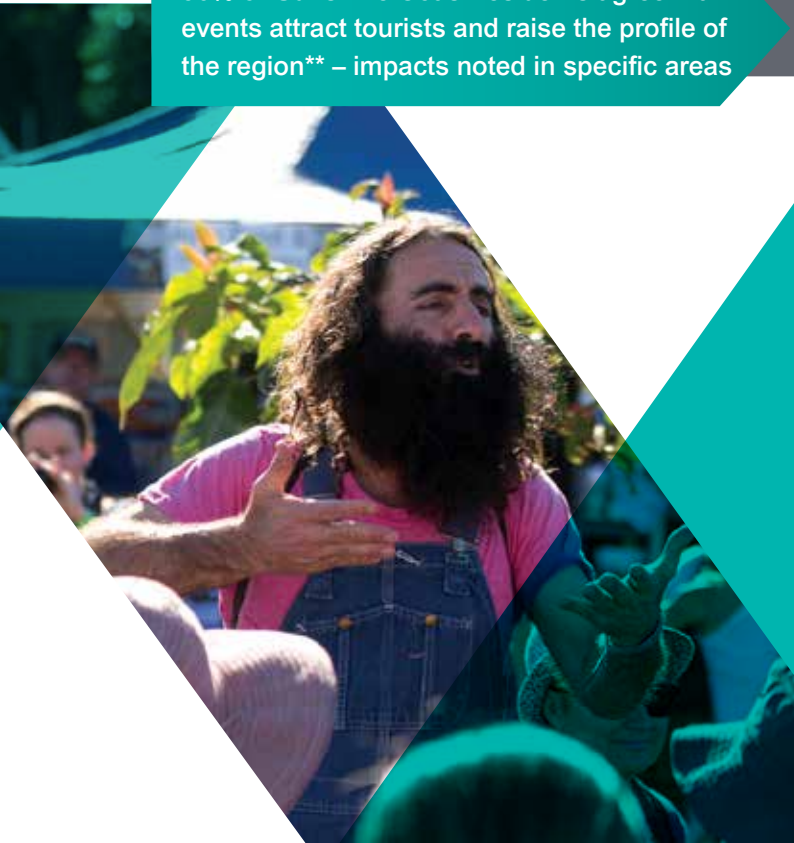
Industry reputation as a premier event destination drives a 50% increase in enquiries and proposals for quality event projects above 2017 levels

96% of Sunshine Coast residents agree that events attract tourists and raise the profile of the region** – impacts noted in specific areas

The Sunshine Coast community continues to support and see the value of major events - Maintain over 90% agreement

*Source – Roy Morgan National Holiday Market Report 2016/17. Destination preference is the percentage of national survey respondents who indicate they would like to travel to the region in the next two years

**Source – TEQ social indicators research 2017





Background

Major events on the Sunshine Coast – progress since 2012

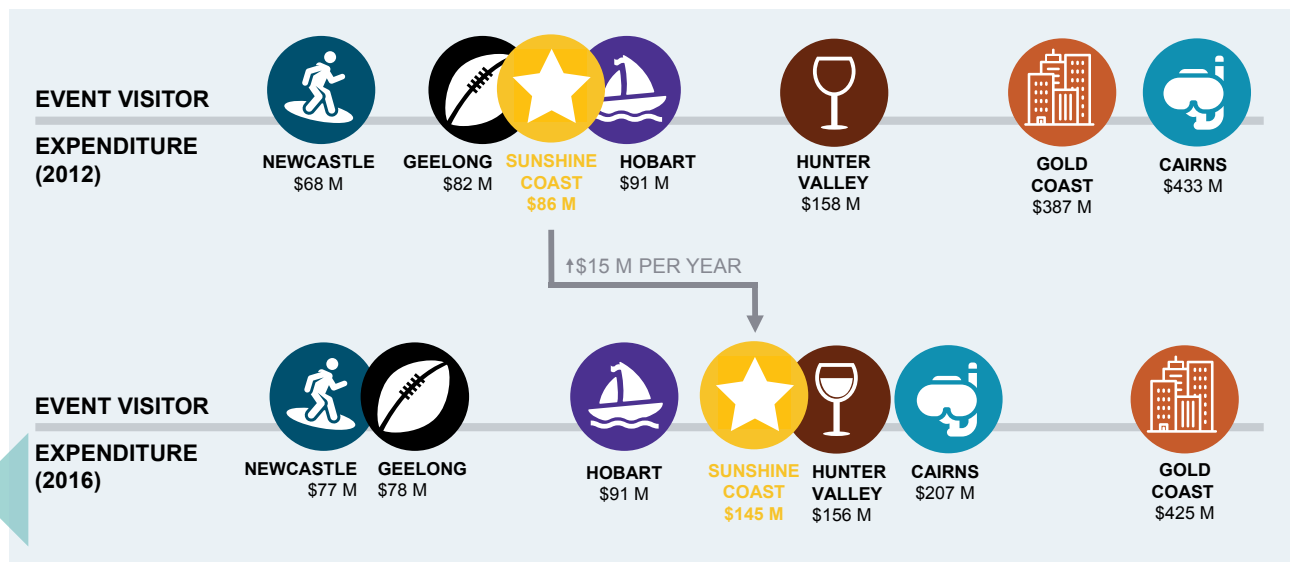
Over the term of the previous *Sunshine Coast Major and Regional Events Strategy 2013-2017*, events have grown in significance as a means of attracting visitors and their associated expenditure to the region. Since 2012, visitors to the Sunshine Coast who participated in at least one event have grown by 12%, driven largely by domestic visitor audiences. Direct comparison of the economic impact of major events between destinations is not possible given differing measurement approaches, however, overall event industry performance using national tourism statistics offers a valuable comparison.

While higher volume visitor destinations will inevitably

have a larger overall events economy, analysis shows that Sunshine Coast has experienced a steady rise in overall events value during the 2012-2016 period. Achieving a notable shift from day visitors to overnight stays in the domestic visitor market has been instrumental in generating increased levels of visitor expenditure.

The information presented in Figure 1 relates to visitor expenditure for all events, not solely those supported via the Major Event Sponsorship Program, but is a useful representation of the region's growing recognition as a premier events destination.

Figure 1: Sunshine Coast Event Performance Comparators - All Event Visitors



Source: Tourism Research Australia, National Visitor Survey and International Visitor Survey



“Every dollar of event investment can also be seen as a dollar invested in experience and destination marketing. Events complement the leisure travel sector and are often the deciding factor to travel, especially outside peak holiday periods”.

Tourism and Events
Queensland Events
Strategy 2025

Key achievements

Key achievements for events funded from the Major Event Sponsorship Program from 2013–2017 include:



▶ Support for more than 200 major events throughout the Sunshine Coast region



▶ 59 new events to the region



▶ Economic impact of approximately \$342 million



▶ Supported over 3,830 jobs (FTE)



▶ Return on Investment of more than 1:30 sustained over the five-year program

“We were fully booked out for the Netball Cup and continued to refer business on to other accommodation providers. We were also extremely busy with other events such as the Sunshine Coast Marathon and Ironman and we find major events in general are hugely beneficial to our business. Our facilities are well suited to family orientated events and we find many teams and participants pass on recommendations about our park which is great exposure for us”.

Kirk Nicholson – Maroochy River Park

Strategic framework

The Sunshine Coast is one of Australia's most popular visitor destinations, making tourism and events highly important local economic drivers. Sunshine Coast Council's vision is for the Sunshine Coast to be *Australia's most sustainable region - healthy, smart and creative*. Becoming a nationally recognised destination through major events tourism has an important role to play in achieving this vision.

The region hosts a rich variety of major events each year which reinforce its reputation as a leading tourism destination. These events generate visitor expenditure which supports local businesses, as well as contributing to a range of liveability and community development objectives.

The role of events in contributing to a healthy, smart and creative region:

Events (sporting, cultural, business etc.) are an increasingly important motivator for tourism, figuring prominently in the development and marketing of most destinations and playing a growing role in destination competitiveness – OECD: Major Events as Catalysts for Tourism, 2017.

Major events are important catalysts for economic development, social inclusion and community well-being. The economic impact of major events can be broad and

far-reaching. The region benefits from increased visitation (e.g. boosted accommodation, transport, food and business expenditure) and also the localised expenditure associated with holding the event (e.g. equipment and service hire). This additional spending can provide significant stimulus to local businesses and enhance the viability of the tourism and tourism-dependent industries. According to Tourism Australia, for every dollar spent on tourism activities, another 91 cents is generated in other parts of the economy*. Hosting major events is one way to build a region's national and international reputation.

Tourism Research Australia's 2014 report 'Events: Drivers of Regional Tourism' found that after a satisfactory experience participating in a regional event, 65% of all attendees reported that they intended to visit the destination again in the next 12 months, and 42% recommended the destination to other travellers.

In addition, the audience reach of major events provides opportunities for longer term visitation, economic and industry benefit to the region. Major events attract large participant numbers who experience the region and become advocates for future visitation – either by themselves and their families, or through their own networks and contacts. The media, broadcast and digital exposure provided by events expands the audience even further – showcasing the region's attractions and activities directly to consumers and potential future visitors.

*Source – Tourism Australia Annual Report 2016/17



In this way, major events have a significant role to play in the building of destination awareness and in destination preference (if choosing a destination to visit, how likely are the region's target market to choose the Sunshine Coast above other competitor destinations).

Major events therefore deliver both short and longer-term value to the region in the form of:

Immediate term (during event)

- Direct economic impact
- Business and industry involvement
- Increase in destination awareness
- Showcasing of destination
- Participation for local community.

Longer term

- Repeat visitation from event participants
- Contribution to increase in wider visitation (through destination promotion)
- Event industry development
- Improved attractiveness as a place to live and do business.

Building on success – event value optimisation

Sunshine Coast's major events portfolio has grown significantly over the past 10 years. Leadership provided by Council and the Sunshine Coast Events Board has been instrumental in reaching a point where the focus on attracting and supporting events can shift from quantity (volume of events) to quality (i.e. the events which best deliver our objectives).

To best derive value from the events program, Council will continue to develop its selection and support processes to ensure that it is selecting and funding activities which, in combination, offer a diverse calendar of projects which deliver across all the key goals.

The concept of program diversity is vital to achieving the range of desired outcomes – both in terms of location and timing (to spread impact and benefit as widely as possible across the region and the calendar year), and in nature or type of event and identified target audience

(to reach the optimum balance between the short-term economic return and the longer-term destination benefits of the program).

While immediate and measurable economic impact will always be at the centre of project selection, in practical terms this may result in some projects being chosen based on their potential to drive awareness, reach a wide audience outside of the region, or to fill an identified gap in the current event program.

The region's approach also needs to be mindful of the underpinning infrastructure necessary to support event delivery. This will require understanding of current event venue capability, identification of new venues or additional capacity required to support objectives, and a cooperative approach with Council and regional stakeholders in the development and delivery of future facilities plans.





Current event landscape on the Sunshine Coast

Governance and partnerships

A number of partners and stakeholders are directly involved in securing, promoting, supporting and delivering the region's major events.

Sunshine Coast Council

Council is the lead agency for development and delivery of the Major Events Strategy for the region. Through the application of the Major Events Sponsorship Program, Council invests significant funding in the acquisition and development of events across the region.

The Economic Development Branch of Council actively pursues new event opportunities, oversees the management of the Sponsorship Program and provides specific resources to supported events to maximise their benefit to the region.

In addition, Council funds and coordinates a range of community arts and cultural events through the Arts, Heritage and Library Branch, through its grant program administered through the Community Planning and Development Branch, and sporting activity through the Sport and Community Venues branch, all of which complement the overall goals of the Major Events Strategy.

The Community Land Permits Unit oversees the permit and operational planning process for all projects, liaising with local stakeholders to ensure safe and well-managed events.

Sunshine Coast Events Board

The Sunshine Coast Events Board was established in November 2013 following Council's adoption of the *Sunshine Coast Major and Regional Events Strategy 2013-2017*. Collectively the nine-member Board provides strong leadership and sound advice in support of the Strategy. The Board's role is to:

- Oversee implementation of the Sunshine Coast Major Events Strategy
- Provide strategic advice to Council on issues and collaborative opportunities to support the region's investment in existing major events (including reviewing sponsorship applications), and
- Secure new major events for the region.

The Sunshine Coast Events Board is recognised as having played an instrumental role in growing the value of events to the local economy. It is widely viewed as effective and efficient, providing an optimal mix of industry and expert input to decision-making.

Visit Sunshine Coast (VSC)

Visit Sunshine Coast's core role is to promote the Sunshine Coast as a premier holiday and business events destination locally, nationally and internationally, as well as to develop the resilience and capability of the regional tourism industry. VSC works closely with Council and event organisers to leverage marketing and promotional benefits for the region from supported major events. Under the guidance of the *Sunshine Coast Major Events Strategy 2018-2027*, VSC will have a significant role to play in the future of the events program, particularly in relation to the actions and goals around destination branding, audience reach and the specific event leveraging program.

Tourism and Events Queensland (TEQ)

Tourism and Events Queensland's aim is to foster the creation of a collaborative tourism and events business system that engages and provides a sense of ownership for all stakeholders. Its purpose is to facilitate the promotion, marketing and development of tourism to and within Queensland. In practical terms, its marketing channels and platforms provide important avenues for promoting Sunshine Coast events to domestic and international markets. TEQ provides direct financial support to many of the existing major events in the region, along with the 'E-12' program for selected significant events which brings together key stakeholders to provide discussion around a strong growth pathway for the event.

Venue and Industry Partners

Event organisers, venues and suppliers play a vital role in the management and delivery of events in the region. High quality event promotion and organisation, along with welcoming and professional venues have played a large role in the growing profile of the Sunshine Coast as a premier event destination. The region is fortunate to have access to a network of suppliers, sporting and cultural

organisations who are well equipped to continue the diversification and growth of the local industry.

The University of the Sunshine Coast (USC) is continuing to play an increasing role in major events. As home of the Sunshine Coast Lightning netball team and the Australian Cycling Academy, USC is developing a national profile as an industry leading home of elite sport.

Community and Local Business

Central to the success of any event strategy is the level of support obtained from the local community. Participants in Sunshine Coast events often comment on the welcoming and friendly atmosphere at local

events, and on the dedication and size of our local event volunteer workforce. Events in the region also attract a loyal group of local participants, audiences and attendees, who help to sustain the event products and create the atmosphere and experience our visitors are drawn to.

It is acknowledged that some major events impact on the local community – creating temporary access or congestion issues. The goals in this Strategy focus on spreading the impacts and benefits of events across the region and communicating both the short and long-term benefits of strategic investment in major events. Both are vital to ensuring that community and business support is maintained in future years.

Best practice – what attributes are typically found in a successful major events destination?

There is not a single formula that guarantees success, however, there are a number of factors that contribute to making a successful events destination. Sunshine Coast performs strongly against many of these attributes:

Figure 2: Event Destination Best Practice Attributes

Strategy and vision	Current Sunshine Coast Status
• A clear vision, goals and objectives with stakeholder and community support	✓
• A commitment from the region to embrace events, based around strong partnerships between key stakeholders	✓
Facilities and location	
• Geographical location – proximity to large day visitor and domestic markets, and access via airport gateways	✓
• High quality natural environment	✓
• An appropriate accommodation mix throughout the region	✓
• Investment in event infrastructure to accommodate a range of events - from local community events to mega events, including venues, public transport, etc.	~
• Infrastructure to accommodate diversity of events i.e. indoor venues for 'weatherproof' events	~
Governance and process	
• Continuous improvement in governance	✓
• Flexible funding model to support existing events and new event acquisition	✓
• Clear systems and processes between stakeholders for event planning and management	✓
Community and business engagement	
• Strong community engagement and continuous feedback for growth and development	✓
• Local trade and business involvement with events	✓

- ✓ Sunshine Coast performs strongly
- ✓ Progress has been made, however, room for improvement exists
- ~ More attention required

The Sunshine Coast's competitive advantage – our tourism and major event destination 'brand'

The Sunshine Coast is proud of its hard-earned reputation as a premier Australian event destination. Excellent event infrastructure, combined with the expertise and commitment of Council and partners, leverages the region's unrivalled natural assets, providing the perfect destination for sustained delivery of high quality and successful major events.



A destination brand represents both the identity and characteristics of a destination, as well as the activities and messaging undertaken to communicate and reinforce that brand. Destination marketing (such as leverage of major events) can build the brand of a place by defining and communicating its uniqueness and attractiveness to potential visitors and investors – Oxford Economics – Destination Promotion, An Engine of Economic Development 2014.

Our destination brand - for event participants and visitors

In line with the Visit Sunshine Coast 'Naturally Refreshing' message, our brand as a desirable destination is driven by the following attributes:

- Enviably climate and weather conditions conducive to outdoor activity throughout the year
- Safe, clean and beautiful beaches
- Stunning natural environment of the Hinterland and Glasshouse Mountains
- Low density living/space/lack of congestion
- Friendly, safe and welcoming community
- Innovative food and produce
- Quality accommodation, venues and visitor experiences
- Easily accessible location (our own airport, plus proximity to Brisbane), and
- Clean air, green natural environment.

Major events highlight and display these assets as the regional 'brand' to participants.

The Sunshine Coast advantage - for event promoters and industry

The Sunshine Coast has long been a proven destination for event promoters, participants and their families and friends. There are many reasons why the region has established a reputation as a destination of choice as a host for major events.

1 **Holiday Destination = Increased Event Attendance - Key Revenue Driver**

The Sunshine Coast regional brand as a desirable visitor destination drives attendance for major events. Participants choosing event options from a crowded national calendar are drawn to the region's attractions and climate – not just for their chosen event activity, but also for the vacation and relaxation options available during their stay.

2 **Infrastructure, Venues and Facilities**

The region has both natural and man-made assets at its disposal to offer promoters. All types of major events are well accommodated, either along the beaches, roads or pathways, or at stadiums or public venues.

3 **Available, Accessible and Affordable**

The Sunshine Coast is easily accessible with its own international airport, train stations and only one-hour drive from Brisbane. It also offers an extensive range of accommodation options of all types and for all budgets. More than one million potential customers live within a 45-minute drive.

4 **“Welcoming Culture”**

Sunshine Coast residents are known for their welcoming and visitor friendly culture. The tourism industry is one of the region's largest employers, with strong support across all elements of the community. This helps make event promoters' lives easier by making visitors feel valued and appreciated.

5 **Experienced Event Industry**

Key stakeholders across the industry have years of experience in the events business. From State and Local Governments, Tourism, Police, Emergency Services, Department of Main Roads, public transport organisations, National Parks and the University of Sunshine Coast – all of whom work in cooperation to deliver best results for major events and the wider region. Years of hosting successful major events has also stimulated the creation of a well-resourced and experienced event supplier network.

6 **Investment in Tourism**

The Sunshine Coast community is committed both strategically and financially to invest in major events that bring benefits to the region. Council provides significant investment through the Major Events Sponsorship program to provide direct funding support to targeted events. A dedicated team of major events and tourism staff work with all sponsored events to negotiate Council support and provide specialised local advice and guidance.



The region's event target audiences

The Sunshine Coast's natural attractions, facilities and programs to support major event activity places the region in a prime position to appeal to event audiences across a range of demographics and interests. The broad target groups for 2018-2027 will be:



Southern sun lovers

Those seeking an escape generally from the colder months. Coming from Victoria, NSW and New Zealand for longer stay events (3 days plus).

Experience seekers

People seeking a new and unique event experience either to participate, watch or get involved. Tend to be less product loyal, and move to the 'latest' event type regularly.



Sports enthusiasts and devotees

Those people fully committed to their competitive sport. Attracted by the status/challenge of the competition - will travel where the event or championship is being held.

The region's event target audiences



Cultural connoisseurs

People with a real enthusiasm and investment in their passion for food and wine, culture, the arts and unique travel experiences.

Active lifestyle purists and nature lovers (more leisure market)

Those seeking the Sunshine Coast lifestyle "Naturally Refreshing" offering (sun, sea, sand etc.). Relaxation, education and healthy living activities.



Entertainment/excitement followers

Generally, the Y Gens and Millennials who are interested in live music/concerts, and high energy or on-trend events.

Vision 2027

Vision

For the Sunshine Coast to be recognised as the premier regional events destination in Australia where major events deliver maximum results.

This vision is a call to action for the community, all partners and stakeholders in the region's events sector.

The Sunshine Coast has made great strides over the previous five years in establishing its reputation in the events field. However, a renewed focus is essential if the destination is to ensure that we remain at the forefront to maximise the regional benefit provided by major events.

For all destinations, events take place within the context of the host environment and broader economy – scale, type, volume and frequency of events are intimately linked to this context. As such, it is unrealistic for the Sunshine Coast to aspire to being Australia's largest event economy - major city destinations and larger visitor hubs are always likely to outperform it in overall visitor numbers and absolute dollar value.

However, it is realistic and necessary to maximise the value of major events, specific to the unique circumstances and context of the Sunshine Coast. For the region's key stakeholder and partner groups, major events delivering maximum results means:

Visitors: Want to come to events on the Sunshine Coast, recognising it as a great place to visit, to recommend to family and friends, and to return to again and again.

Audience: Audiences for major events see the attractions of the region, and identify the Sunshine Coast as a preferred destination for future travel choices.

Event organisers: Want to bring their events to the Sunshine Coast and have confidence that the region will provide the infrastructure, support services and market opportunity to deliver the best possible events.

Local business and community: See the benefits that major events bring and are well informed of the impacts and opportunities they create.

Mission

To attract, support and grow a diverse calendar of events that promote the region, drive visitation and create lasting benefits for Sunshine Coast businesses and the community.

A clear-sighted and focused perspective is necessary to achieve a vision where the Sunshine Coast is recognised as *the premier regional destination in Australia where major events deliver maximum results*.

The region's mission represents the organisational, investment and management challenges which Council and its regional partners now need to take up. As major event investment is supported by Council and regional funding, actions which maximise economic benefits are a clear priority. Maintenance and growth in satisfaction levels and engagement among the community, businesses and stakeholders are also key enablers for Council's economic impact ambitions.

Organisationally, priorities will be:

- **Targeted event acquisition:** A proactive and flexible approach to targeting new events for the region, securing those events which have the capacity to fully leverage the region's assets and strategic aspirations.
- **Selective event retention and development:** Nurturing and developing those events that Council wants and needs to retain, ensuring they deliver the very best possible outcomes for organisers and the region as a whole.
- **Maximising return on investment:** Securing the maximum economic results, supported by assessment and measurement mechanisms which allow transparent and objective decision making.
- **Developing a diverse and sustainable portfolio of events:** Striving for diversity in the events calendar (audience, location, type and timing) where this supports overall strategic and return on investment priorities.
- **Continued excellence in governance and event management:** Continued focus on governance, project selection, measurement of outcomes and targeted event support as key enablers for ensuring major event outcomes continue to be achieved and reviewed.
- **Targeted event leveraging:** Focus our promotional, support and leveraging resources on a small number of targeted event projects – with specific leveraging plans and post event reporting to measure the influence on event outcomes.



Goals

Specifically, the Major Events Sponsorship Program delivers for the region by attracting, supporting and leveraging events that:

- 1 Maximise direct economic return to the region
- 2 Showcase the Sunshine Coast as a destination and increase the region's appeal to potential visitors
- 3 Use the audience reach of major events to promote the Sunshine Coast within target audiences
- 4 Spread the impacts and benefits as widely as possible across the region and the calendar year
- 5 Promote and engage the region's high value industries, and
- 6 Are in keeping with Sunshine Coast community values and Council's vision to be *healthy, smart and creative*.

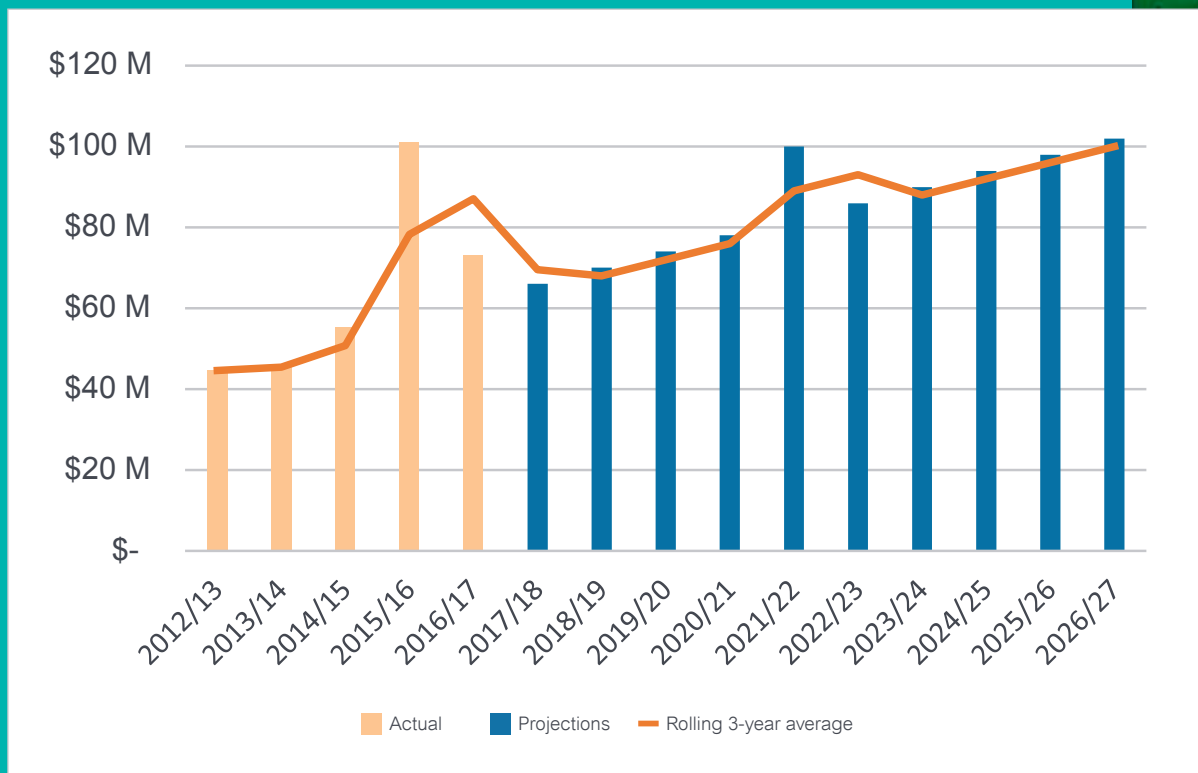


Pathways to success

The region will pursue six priority pathways to ensure major events deliver maximum results.

- 1 **Showcase the region's strengths:** Continue the development of the Sunshine Coast destination brand, using major events to showcase the full range of the region's natural, physical and community assets
- 2 **Spread the word:** Use the media, digital, influencer and broadcast potential of major events to increase the audience reach and awareness of the Sunshine Coast destination brand
- 1 **Drive maximum return:** Implement specific leveraging strategies to increase the benefits derived from individual events
- 2 **Best practice region:** Be a leader in process and governance, sponsorship selection, and in support and leverage for major event projects
- 3 **Create industry demand:** Grow the profile of the Sunshine Coast as a highly desirable host destination for the event industry, and
- 4 **Engage the community:** Drive continued business and community support through promotion of the outcomes and benefits from the region's hosting of major events.

Economic impact of sponsored major events



Note: 2016 data includes the Australian Surf Life Saving Championship event, which is also confirmed for the region in 2021. The investment in this event is spread across the preceding financial years





Pathway 1 - Maximising results through showcasing the region's strengths

Continue the development of the Sunshine Coast brand through major events

In order to maximise the branding and perception benefits from the Major Events Sponsorship Program, the greatest value is accrued from attracting and delivering events which play to the region's strengths. Aligning major events with the region's hero and signature assets and experiences delivers mutual benefits - adding value to the destination's brand image and leveraging the benefits of these existing strengths for major event delivery.

The region should strive for new major events and retention of iconic events that align with showcasing the natural landscape of the Sunshine Coast, feed the consumer need of experiential events and generate a targeted return for the region.

The profile of the Sunshine Coast's brand will continue to be developed and built through major events. Brand pillars include contemporary beach culture; wonders of nature; innovative food and produce; immersive encounters and exhilarating events. Major events provide focal points through the tourism year to showcase the brand to visitors.

High quality experiences underpin the *Naturally Refreshing* brand, also making high quality event delivery a necessity.

Council will work with event organisers to ensure that the positioning of the region is maximised through each event – ensuring quality experiences for event participants and visitors, as well as capturing iconic imagery and promotional material for use in media and broadcast channels.

Actions for 2018-2021 (first three years of Strategy)

Actions	Indicators
1 Target new event acquisition opportunities which align with the full range of the region's assets and unique advantages.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Event participation/satisfaction Net promoter score
2 Incorporate alignment with the event destination brand into event selection and assessment criteria.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Destination preference score
3 Implement a scoping exercise to identify which existing events best showcase the region's assets and explore how these events can be better supported to ensure retention.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Event calendar contains spread of projects across all elements of the destination brand
4 As a means of understanding the potential brand-led opportunities, conduct an annual scoping review of new and emerging event trends to assess fit with the Sunshine Coast brand, and how these trends might appeal to target audiences.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quantity of event imagery and promotion that portrays the region's highlights.
5 Working closely with Visit Sunshine Coast and event operators, ensure that destination brand values are reflected in event promotion, signage and captured imagery.	
6 Develop and implement additional opportunities for travel packages, incorporating quality regional tourism experiences linked to events.	



'Branding associated with the successful hosting of major events can provide lasting recognition of destination branding in key tourism markets, encourage return visitation of attendees/participants, and a better understanding of the focus of the event (sport, arts and culture, food and wine, etc.)'

OECD 2017 – Major events as catalysts for tourism



Pathway 2 - maximising results through spreading the word

Use major events to increase the audience reach and awareness of the Sunshine Coast brand

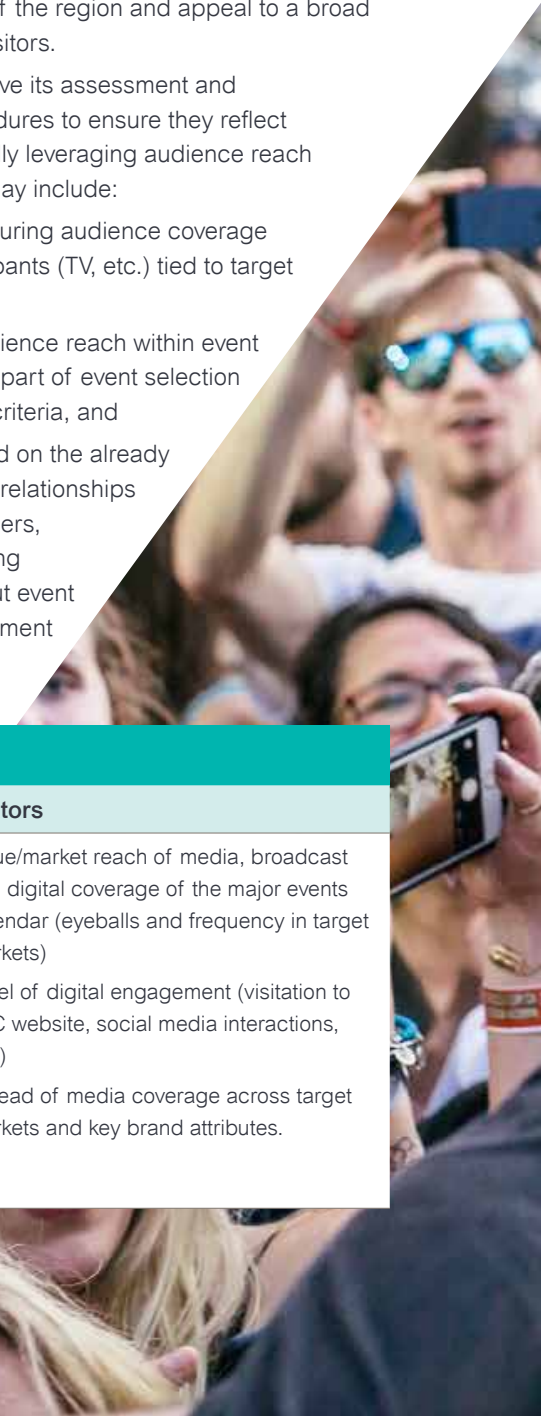
The full value of events is delivered on a number of levels, most obviously with the direct expenditure of event attendees within the destination. However, significant value can also be garnered from remote audiences i.e. those watching where there is domestic or international television coverage, those who read about them in digital or print media, or those who interact with the activity through social media. Fully leveraging this audience reach can generate significant longer-term opportunities for the region.

The media, digital influencer and broadcast potential of major events will be used to increase the audience reach and awareness of the Sunshine Coast brand. Council will support events that have mass audience potential and work with these products to ensure the messaging and imagery presented to this audience through their exposure to the event best reflects the destination brand. In this way, every high-reach event becomes a low cost, high-impact destination advertisement for the region.

Ensuring a diverse portfolio of events (both in terms of target audience and physical location) is also important to maximising the value of media and broadcast exposure. A well-rounded calendar of projects will showcase all parts of the region and appeal to a broad range of potential visitors.

Council will also evolve its assessment and measurement procedures to ensure they reflect the importance of fully leveraging audience reach opportunities. This may include:

- Valuing and measuring audience coverage outside of participants (TV, etc.) tied to target markets
- Incorporating audience reach within event target markets as part of event selection and assessment criteria, and
- Continuing to build on the already excellent working relationships with event organisers, developing ongoing contact throughout event planning, development and delivery.



Actions for 2018-2021

Actions	Indicators
7 Develop a quantifiable audience reach measure for major events – to use in event selection processes to secure projects with maximum coverage potential.	• Value/market reach of media, broadcast and digital coverage of the major events calendar (eyeballs and frequency in target markets)
8 Ensure that events with high audience reach potential have the imagery, assets and information to best portray the destination in their promotion and coverage.	• Level of digital engagement (visitation to VSC website, social media interactions, etc.)
9 Work and engage with existing events to explore opportunities to further leverage audience reach in target markets.	• Spread of media coverage across target markets and key brand attributes.
10 Identify and target key digital influencers related to the event and high value industry to broaden appeal and promotion.	





Pathway 3 - Maximising results through driving maximum return

The most successful event sponsorship programs from both the private and government sectors demonstrate targeted and proactive event leveraging campaigns. Once events have been secured in the region's Major Events Sponsorship Program, resources need to be focused on driving maximum value from key projects. With more than 55 events sponsored in 2016-2017, spreading the leveraging resources across the entire program will too heavily dilute the focus and potential outcomes.

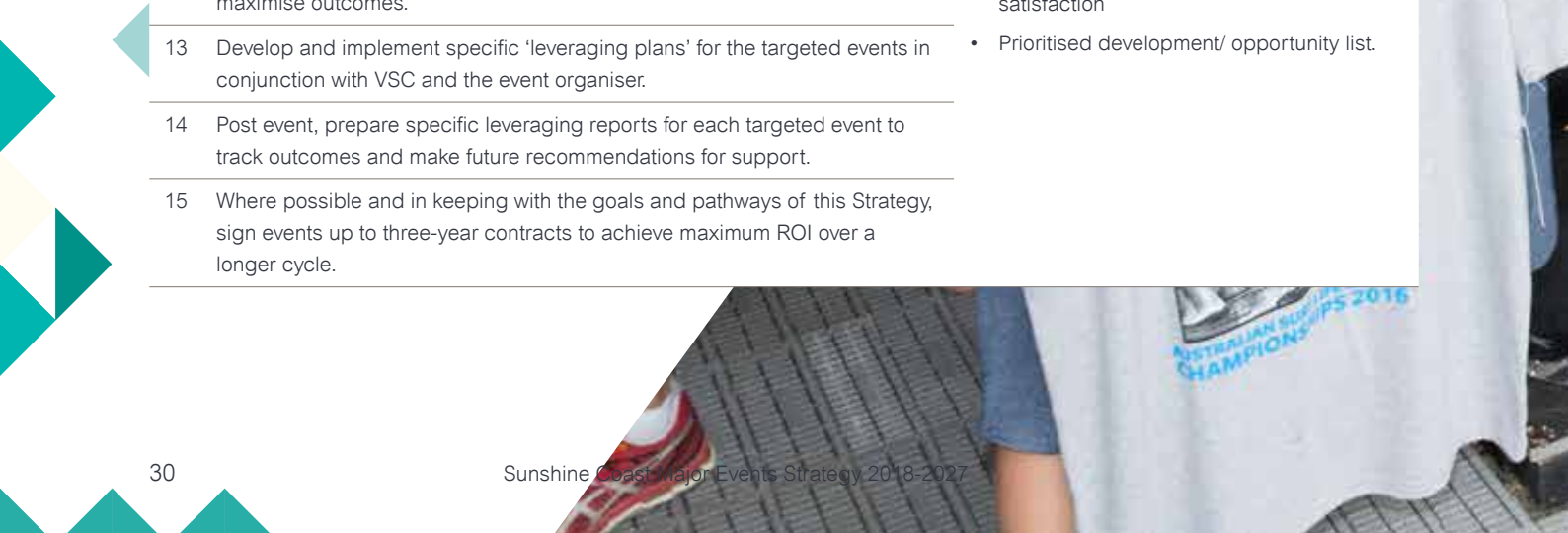
Council will optimise the value of supported events in the region; selecting a small number (6-8) of key projects each year for targeted leveraging to maximise value. These events should show demonstrable growth potential, be especially important as focal points or attractors for sub-regions, or offer obvious upsides to extend audience reach. Adopting the principle of 'quality over quantity' provides a sound basis for a targeted investment approach - optimising the economic, community and media value of events.

Leveraging activities should be aligned specifically to each targeted project and may include:

- Promotional focus on a particular event to drive visitation
- Added inducements to event participants to increase length of stay and local spend (e.g. accommodation or attraction deals or information)
- Creating linkages between existing events and regional attractions to encourage visitors to attend or participate in more than one activity
- Focusing on signage, imagery or promotional assets for broadcast or high audience reach events
- Specific assistance or mentoring to developing events, or those which have identified potential to expand, and
- Creating content and influencer strategies to engage and extend reach via digital channels.

Actions for 2018-2021

Actions	Indicators
11 Review the major events portfolio on an annual basis to assess those which best meet strategic objectives and offer the best growth/leveraging potential – identify 6 key projects per year for targeted leveraging to maximise value.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ROI of targeted events • Increased performance against strategic goals by targeted events
12 Investigate matched (or tied) funding for specific leveraging activities to maximise outcomes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved event organiser sustainability/satisfaction
13 Develop and implement specific 'leveraging plans' for the targeted events in conjunction with VSC and the event organiser.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritised development/ opportunity list.
14 Post event, prepare specific leveraging reports for each targeted event to track outcomes and make future recommendations for support.	
15 Where possible and in keeping with the goals and pathways of this Strategy, sign events up to three-year contracts to achieve maximum ROI over a longer cycle.	







Pathway 4 - Maximising results through being a best practice region

Be a leader in process and governance

Council will be a leader in event governance, management and support services. This means continuing to build on what is already good practice in areas such as process and governance, sponsorship selection, event acquisition, event sustainability and organisational support for major event projects.

Organisationally, Council will maintain and further grow its status as a leader in process and governance for major events by continued improvement through:

- Building on current governance and decision-making structures - undertaking annual reviews of governance procedures, building on change management and succession planning support where required
- Committing to clear and transparent communications with event, business and community partners
- Establishing best practice procedures in contracting, measurement and assessment of Council supported major events, and
- Working with all regional stakeholders to continually improve event practices and processes across all major events, to enhance our reputation for quality, safety and customer experience.

Actions for 2018-2021

Actions	Indicators
16 Review procedures in contracting, measurement and assessment to maintain the region's best practice status in these areas.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customer satisfaction survey (event organisers – existing and prospective events) • Retention of high performing existing events • Performance in industry benchmarking processes.
17 Undertaking annual reviews of governance procedures, building on change management and succession planning support where required.	
18 Work with key industry stakeholders such as TEQ and VSC to share data on the impact of major events, and develop additional methods to track additional outcomes such as repeat visitation from event participants and audiences.	
19 Sunshine Coast Events Board and Council's Tourism and Major Events Unit continue to advocate for improved regional coordination of major event operations and delivery services.	
20 Development of centralised online application tool to increase major event visibility across all of Council.	







Pathway 5 - maximising results through creating industry demand

Grow the profile of the Sunshine Coast as a major event destination to the event industry

Council will grow the profile of the Sunshine Coast as a premier major events destination to the event industry by leveraging its growing reputation in the industry - for best practice processes in governance and support services, and clearly communicating its competitive advantages as a major events destination.

A higher profile within the Australian event industry will drive an increase in the number of event proposals and sponsorship opportunities to consider. The intention of this is not to increase the number of projects supported through the Major Events Sponsorship Program, but rather to increase the pool of potential projects to choose between to ensure best fit and maximum return to the region.

Priorities include:

Proactive communication: Proactive and consistent communication which promotes opportunities and inspires ideas to drive more major event applications.

Growing visibility: To support the ambitions in new event development and acquisition, the region needs to grow its visibility with key stakeholders and in appropriate industry forums, conferences and industry associations.

Event acquisition: A proactive and flexible approach to actively pursue new events for the region, securing those events which have the capacity to fully leverage the region's assets and strategic aspirations.

Event retention and development: Nurturing and developing those events the region wants and needs to retain, ensuring they deliver the very best possible outcomes for organisers and the community as a whole.

Maximising return on investment: Securing the maximum economic result, supported by assessment and measurement mechanisms which allow transparent and objective decision making.

Actions for 2018-2021

Actions	Indicators
21 Actively promote the region's strengths and achievements in hosting major events of all types to key promoters, influencers and the wider event industry.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enquiry numbers Proposals submitted (quality and relevance)
22 Improve outward facing event support information services (websites, social media platforms, etc.) to present clear and professional information to potential event promoters.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Invitations to participate in state and national event industry processes Interest from existing events targeted from other regions.
23 Raise the profile of the Sunshine Coast Events Board and Council through participation and speaking slots at conferences, industry workshops and liaison with key partners (e.g. TEQ).	
24 Develop case studies which can be used for future event attraction.	
25 Develop additional opportunities for famil visits from key industry targets, and hosting of key industry events.	





Pathway 6 - maximising results through engaging with communities

Council will communicate effectively with businesses and the community to continue to build support by promoting the outcomes and benefits of major events. Active engagement by businesses adds considerable value to events, extending expenditure benefits through the economy as well as providing a co-ordinated and coherent experience offering to visitors. Strong levels of support from residents not only provides a potential audience for events, but also helps create a feeling of ‘*natural fit*’ where the major event is identified as being at home in the region.

The Sunshine Coast has established strong credentials as a great home for a range of events and has taken advantage of its coastal and hinterland locations as accessible and attractive venues. It will continue to build on these strengths, but where possible, add an increased focus on spreading projects around the region

and across the year to disperse the impacts and benefits as widely as possible. Events should support and showcase the regional values and aspirations, including ecological sustainability, social diversity, innovation and sustainable growth. Major events should encourage and facilitate community pride, tolerance and connectedness between residents, the business community and government. Retaining and building community and business support for investment in events continues to be a priority. Without community support, the events are unlikely to perform to their greatest potential; reputational risk grows and the relationships with event proponents can weaken, resulting in events being potentially lost to competitor destinations.

Actions for 2018-2021

Actions	Indicators
26 Include diversity of location, timing and event type as an influencer in the event selection process (where this is possible without jeopardising program outcomes).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dispersal of benefit across region • Specific business opportunities created • Direct local spend by organisers
27 Through the targeted leveraging program (Pathway 3) create additional awareness of local supply and opportunities for specific local business alignment and benefit from key event projects.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Event business community support/ awareness of benefit • Community support (as measured in the TEQ Social Indicators Survey).
28 Work with key event communication campaigns to, where possible, reduce the effect on businesses impacted by specific events.	
29 Continue to implement specific communication programs – targeting business and community partners, existing event organisers and prospective event organisers to further promote the outcomes and benefits of the Program.	
30 Ensure meaningful community engagement takes place as part of event planning.	
31 Engage with businesses through feedback surveys after Major Events to gauge direct impact, monitor community sentiment and collect testimonials on the positive impact of events.	





Fairtrade coffee

Conclusion and next steps

Following on from the implementation of the *Sunshine Coast Major and Regional Events Strategy 2013-2017* the Major Events Sponsorship Program for the Sunshine Coast enters the next decade in a position of strength. The region's natural advantages as a tourism and events destination, combined with leadership and significant support from Council and the Sunshine Coast Events Board have attracted, developed and assisted a high-quality calendar of major events that have continually delivered excellent results.

The vision and actions outlined in this plan are designed to build on this base of success, by focussing attention on activities that maximise the value gained from the Major Events Sponsorship Program. This will be done by ensuring that selection processes for sponsored events align with the goals as outlined in this Strategy, that leveraging and support campaigns derive the best possible returns from each project, and governance, measurement and assessment tools continue to be industry best practice.

In keeping with the mission to ***maintain, attract and grow events that promote the region, drive visitation and create lasting benefits to Sunshine Coast businesses and the community*** Council will emphasise both the short and long-term benefits of a diversified calendar of events, balancing the short-term economic return with the longer term exposure, branding and awareness benefits that can be created through high-profile projects.

Council will also work to raise the profile of the Sunshine Coast as a premier major events destination, to drive more applications and interest from event promoters wishing to bring new products to the region. This increase in the range and number of projects considered for support through the Major Events Sponsorship Program will allow Council to be more targeted and selective in supporting the events which bring the best overall value to the region.

After the adoption of this Strategy it is the role of the Sunshine Coast Events Board and Sunshine Coast Council to lead the region in the implementation of the actions, goals and measures outlined in this plan. Cooperation across Council, and with wider regional stakeholders will, as always, be central to achieving the vision of the Strategy.

From 2018 to 2021 this document sets out a range of key pathways and actions to achieve Council's goals. Many of these measures can begin being implemented immediately, and review and measurement of results will continue throughout.

This plan should be formally reviewed in 2021 to check progress against goals, and outline a new list of updated actions moving forward.



Appendix one

Consolidated list of actions

Action	Pathway	Link to goals	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Responsibility
1 Target new event acquisition opportunities which align with the full range of the region's assets and unique advantages	1	1,2,3				TMEU, SCEB
2 Incorporate alignment with the event destination brand into event selection and assessment criteria	1	2,3				TMEU
3 Implement a scoping exercise to identify which existing events best showcase the region's assets and explore how these events can be better supported to ensure retention	1	2,3				TMEU
4 Conduct an annual scoping review of new and emerging event trends to assess fit with the Sunshine Coast brand, and how these trends might appeal to the region's target audiences	1	1,2,3				TMEU
5 Ensure that brand values are reflected in event promotion, signage and captured imagery	1	2,3,5				TMEU, VSC, Event Organisers
6 Develop and implement additional opportunities for travel packages, incorporating quality regional tourism experiences linked to events	1	1,2,3,4,5				TMEU, VSC, Event Organisers
7 Develop a quantifiable audience reach measure for major events	2	2,3,6				TMEU
8 Ensure that events with high audience reach potential have the imagery, assets and information to best portray the destination in their promotion and coverage	2	2,3,5,6				TMEU, VSC, Event Organisers
9 Work and engage with existing events to explore opportunities to further leverage audience reach in target markets	2	2,3,5,6				SCEB, TMEU, VSC
10 Identify and target key digital influencers related to the event and high value industry to broaden appeal and promotion	2	1,2,3,5				TMEU, VSC
11 Identify 6 key projects per year for targeted leveraging to maximise value	3	1,3,5				SCEB, TMEU, VSC
12 Investigate matched (or tied) funding for specific leveraging activities to maximise outcomes	3	1,5,6				SCEB, TMEU, VSC
13 Develop and implement specific 'leveraging plans' for the targeted events	3	1,3,5				TMEU, VSC
14 Post event, prepare specific leveraging reports for each targeted event to track outcomes and make future recommendations for support	3	1,2,3,4				TMEU, VSC
15 Where possible, sign events to three-year contracts to achieve maximum ROI over a longer cycle	3	1,2,3				TMEU, SCEB
16 Review procedures in contracting, measurement and assessment to maintain the region's best practice status in these areas	4	4,6				TMEU, SCEB

17	Undertaking annual reviews of governance procedures, building on change management and succession planning support where required	4	4,6			TMEU, SCEB
18	Work with key industry stakeholders such as TEQ and VSC to share data on the impact of major events and develop additional methods to track additional outcomes such as repeat visitation from event participants and audiences	4	1,2,3			TMEU, VSC, TEQ
19	Sunshine Coast Events Board and Council's Tourism and Major Events Unit continue to advocate for improved regional coordination of major event operations and delivery services	4	4,6			TMEU, SCEB
20	Development of centralised online application tool to increase major event visibility across Council	4	4,6			TMEU
21	Actively promote the region's strengths and achievements in hosting major events to key promoters, influencers and the wider event industry	5	2,5,6			SCEB, TMEU, VSC
22	Improve outward facing event support information services (websites, etc.) to present clear and professional information to potential event promoters	5	2,5,6			TMEU, VSC
23	Raise the profile of the Sunshine Coast Events Board and Council through participation and speaking slots at conferences, industry workshops and liaison with key partners (e.g. TEQ)	5	2,5			TMEU, SCEB
24	Develop case studies that can be used for future event attraction	5	1,2,5			SCEB
25	Develop additional opportunities for famil visits from key industry targets, and hosting of key industry events.	5	1,2,5			SCEB
26	Include diversity of location, timing and event type as an influencer in the event selection process (where this is possible without jeopardising program outcomes)	6	4			TMEU, SCEB
27	Through the targeted leveraging program (Pathway 3) create additional awareness of local supply and opportunities for specific local business alignment and benefit from key event projects	6	4,5			TMEU, SCEB, ED Branch
28	Work with key event communication campaigns to, where possible, reduce the effect on businesses impacted by specific events	6	4,5,6			TMEU, Event Organisers, Comms Branch
29	Continue to implement specific communication programs – targeting business and community partners, existing event organisers and prospective event organisers to further promote the outcomes and benefits of the program	6	4,5,6			TMEU, Comms Branch
30	Ensure meaningful community engagement takes place as part of event planning	6	4,5,6			TMEU, Comms Branch
31	Engage with businesses through feedback surveys after major events to gauge direct impact, monitor community sentiment and collect testimonials on the positive impact of events	6	4,5,6			TMEU, Comms Branch

TMEU – Council's Tourism and Major Events Unit
ED Branch – Council's Economic Development Branch

SCEB – Sunshine Coast Events Board
Comms Branch – Council's Communications Branch

VSC – Visit Sunshine Coast
TEQ – Tourism and Events Queensland

Appendix two Alignment with existing policy frameworks

The *Sunshine Coast Major Events Strategy 2018-2027* aligns with Council's key strategic elements and intent of other policies crucial to the development of the region and its major events. A successful major events program provides content and added value to regional development in economic growth, sports, the arts, tourism, environment and liveability, tourism and social inclusion, and in turn benefits from regional advances in all of these sectors.

- *Sunshine Coast Council Corporate Plan 2018-2022* outlines the overall strategy for Council to deliver on its vision to be *Australia's most sustainable region - healthy, smart and creative*.
- *Sunshine Coast Regional Economic Development Strategy 2013-2033: Sunshine Coast – The Natural Advantage* which provides a 20-year vision and blueprint for long term sustainable economic growth, supports the region's enviable and authentic lifestyle and natural assets, and includes a focus on securing investment in tourism, sport and leisure opportunities to support the strengthening of the regional economy.
- *Sunshine Coast Tourism Region, Destination Tourism Plan 2013-2020* provides the definitive direction for tourism and events in the Sunshine Coast tourism region towards 2020, highlighting the resources required to achieve the 2020 target and create a sustainable and competitive tourism and events destination.
- *Sunshine Coast Council Environment and Liveability Strategy 2017* focuses on the natural environment and how it can be preserved and enhanced, as well as the liveability of the region – enabling a good quality of life for all residents and supporting a strong economy in an accessible and well-connected built environment.
- *Sunshine Coast Council Social Strategy 2015* provides a long-term social direction that builds on the region's positive social attributes and identifies shorter term initiatives for responding to the social needs of the region, and further developing community strengths.

- *Sunshine Coast Arts Plan* (in development) is designed to stimulate the region's arts sector and create opportunities to build a strong community of artists, arts practitioners and arts organisations.
- *Tourism and Events Queensland's Events Strategy 2025*, which focuses on targeting and leveraging existing, successful events and recognises that major events focusing on participatory sport and recreation are key strengths, with a longer-term approach of increasing business events. Event Value Optimisation (EVO), Indigenous culture, and experience based events and travel are key indicators for strategic success.
- *Tourism Australia's Tourism 2020 Strategy*, which is Australia's national strategy to enhance growth and competitiveness in the tourism industry by focusing on six strategic areas. It is endorsed by all State and Territory Tourism Ministers and brings the existing work, research and collaboration between industry and governments into a single plan – one that links tourism supply with demand (www.tourismaustralia.com).



Image Credit: William Close and the Earth Harp Collective,
Horizon Festival 2017. Ben Vos Photography.





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