

**9.1 SUMMARY OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROCESS AND KEY THEMES -
DESTINATION MANAGEMENT PLAN DISCUSSION PAPER**

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Index	102.08 - Destination Management
Attachments	None

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the process and a summary of consultation feedback from the recent Community Consultation Process conducted between Friday 15 September 2023 to Sunday 29 October 2023 on the Noosa Shire Destination Management Discussion Paper. The Discussion Paper was a key first step in the development of a Destination Management Plan for Noosa.

Council acknowledges the significant time commitment and extensive feedback received from the community and to honour this support and extensive feedback from the community, it is proposed that more time be taken to complete a deep analysis of the feedback prior to the preparation of a draft Destination Management Plan for further community input in early to mid-2024 following the caretaker period and Council election.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council note the report by the Manager, Economic Development and Destination Management to the Ordinary Meeting dated 14 December 2023 regarding the process to develop a Noosa Shire Destination Management Plan (DMP) and:

- A. Note the summary of consultation key themes and feedback received during the recent community engagement process on the DMP Discussion Paper;
 - B. Note the proposed next steps as detailed in this report for officers to undertake a deep analysis of the data and feedback provided to date to inform the preparation of a draft DMP early to mid 2024.
 - C. Prepare and implement a communication plan to clearly inform the community of the key themes from the community engagement to date and outline the next steps in the DMP process.
 - D. Note the draft DMP will be prepared early in 2024 and reported back to Council for further community engagement in mid 2024.
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REPORT**Background****The Challenge to be Addressed by a Destination Management Plan**

Noosa Council's challenge on how to manage Noosa Shire in a manner that achieves harmony between community enjoyment of amenity and lifestyle and visitor satisfaction is being addressed by the creation of a Destination Management Plan.

While residents acknowledge the importance of tourism to Noosa Shire, the intricate and often interwoven balance between being a great lifestyle destination for residents and an iconic holiday destination for visitors requires careful and thoughtful planning and management.

Noosa Shire is highly prized for its pristine landscapes, contemporary coastal and hinterland lifestyle, strong environmental values, and a warm year-round climate that lends itself to healthy outdoor living and wellbeing.

The Shire is recognised internationally by UNESCO as a Biosphere Reserve, a place where the community lives in harmony with nature and provides a home and employment to a resident population of almost 57,000 people.

Importantly, locals see themselves and their environment as stakeholders, not commodities.

Noosa Shire Tourism Sector

Noosa Shire is a much-loved domestic and international holiday destination, with visitors, like the residents, also benefiting from the destination's natural values, landscapes, and character.

Consistently, the tourism sector is one of the Shire's most valuable economic sectors, employing many locals and generating significant economic benefit to our economy.

Arguably, it is also responsible for a number of the services and amenities that the people of Noosa Shire enjoy today, and for the strong national and international brand reputation with which Noosa businesses, products and services are associated.

Community Engagement Process

Between Friday 15 September 2023 – Sunday 29 October 2023 Noosa Council undertook a comprehensive community engagement exercise to gauge community sentiment and to inform the development of the Destination Management Plan.

The intent of this process was to provide quantitative and qualitative feedback as the basis of robust evidence base upon which, Council's Destination Management Plan for Noosa Shire could be grounded.

The consultation process aimed to:

1. Identify what the community, businesses, and the tourism sector considered to be the key issues, challenges, and opportunities in managing tourism in the future; and
2. Determine the community's appetite for change, including identifying the scope and magnitude of that desired change.

The Community Consultation Process

Council worked with an independent consultant (Tourism Colab) to assist in facilitating the community engagement process, Tourism Colab noted that the Noosa Shire community engagement exercise has been the deepest and most wide-reaching the consultancy has ever seen in Australia on this topic.

Snapshot of Consultation Undertaken

 Postcards distributed to households and businesses 40k <small>Delivery was contracted to Australia Post. Some participants indicated that their household did not receive a postcard.</small>	 Stakeholder Conversations 17 142 participants	 Individuals Submissions 67	 Facilitated Workshops 7 75 participants
 Have your say Short Survey 586	 Have your say Detailed Survey 201	 Coffee Chat Locations 8 84 participants	 Estimated Number of Community Hours Invested 1330+

Multiple engagement and data collection methods were used to generate understanding and to enable a wide range of people to engage in a variety of engagement activities and methods.

Using the ABS sample size calculator, based on a shire-wide population of 57,329 (ABS, 2022) with a 99% confidence level and a 5% chance of error, an appropriate sample size would be 656 responses. On this basis the mixed methods rate of response across the Shire exceeds the desired sample size for the Noosa Shire population.

Significant feedback, ideas and suggestions have been received, this report provides a high level summary of the key themes and issues, however further deep analysis is required of the large amount of feedback to inform the preparation of the DMP, this process will occur over the coming few months and will inform the Draft DMP.

The size and scope of data collected is as follows:

Engagement Method	Data Collected	Data Generated
'Have your say' Detailed Survey	201 surveys	7 questions/82,000 words/164 pages
'Have your say' Short Survey	590 surveys	7 questions/225,000 words/448 pages
Facilitated Workshops	7 workshops/14 hours	56 worksheets/Voice recordings (14 hours)
Targeted Stakeholder Conversations	16 Conversations	Voice recordings, personal notes
Individual Submissions (Individuals and Organisations)	67 submissions	92,000 words (184 pages)
Coffee Chats	84 participants	Personal notes recorded via a custom post-chat digital form

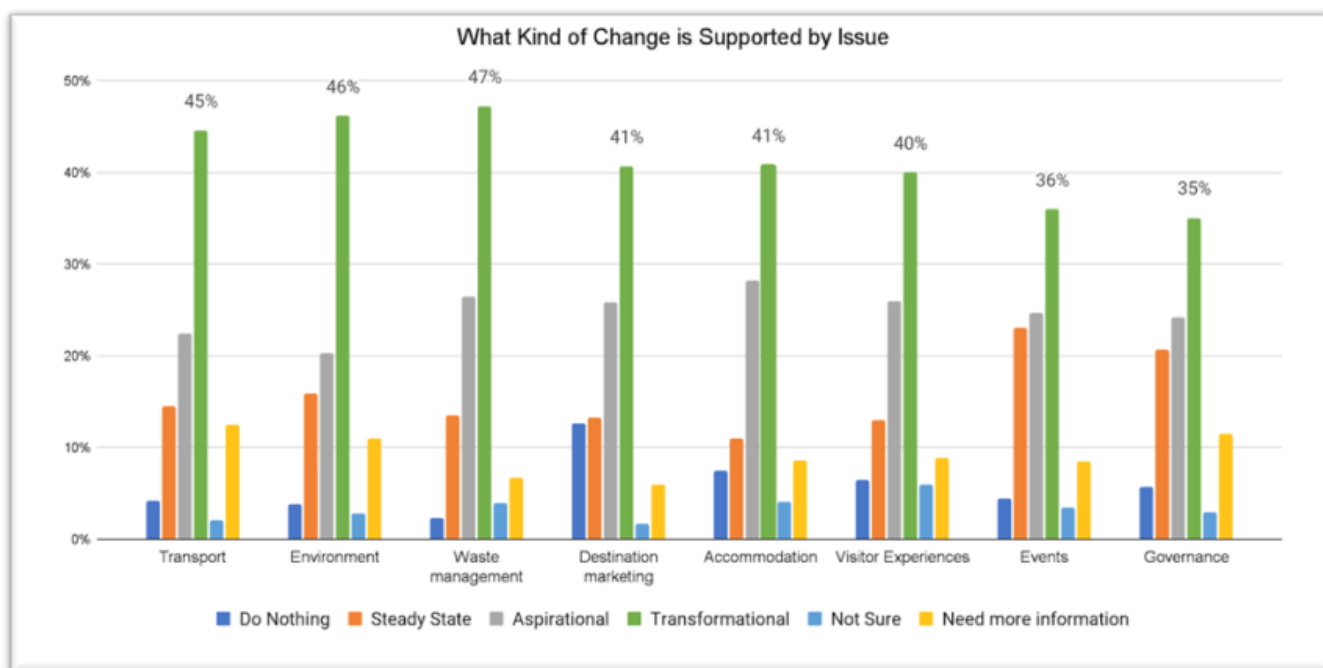
Of the individual submission the following represents the breakdown of submitters.

- 3 (4%) submissions representing businesses
- 8 (12%) submissions representing community groups.
- 5 (7%) submissions representing peak organisations.
- 51 (77%) submissions by residents

The different engagement methods revealed a very consistent set of considerations in developing a Destination Management Plan for Noosa and themes that should be included within the plan.

Summary of Key Community Themes from consultation

1. **Decisive (Transformational) action is Required:** The community feels it has been providing feedback on these and similar issues for many years. Many participants could provide summaries of past consultation processes and the perceived lack of Council action. Regardless of whether they were residents or business, and, across all parts of the shire, there was strong directive for transformative change across all issues and opportunities presented in the Discussion paper for the Destination Management process. Transformational change was described as a "Profound community led change resulting in a noticeable, positive and lasting alteration to Noosa Shire".



2. **Traffic Congestion and Parking Issues:** Feedback indicated strongly that respondents felt traffic and parking issues have detrimentally affected access, satisfaction and liveability in the Shire, this issue has negatively affected community lifestyles and impacted mental health.

3. **Over-tourism and Congestion:** Across all age brackets and locations in the Shire there is concern about the impact of tourism on iconic natural landscapes, sense of community, and lifestyles. Young people voiced heightened concerns over environmental issues and are seeking more input into engagement activities and decision-making.

4. **Protecting the Natural Environment:** Noosa's beaches, forests, parks and wildlife, and its iconic

environmental features are considered to be at risk, and require strong commitment to be protected from damage by development and over-tourism.

5. Short Term Accommodation: There continues to be widespread concern over the detrimental effects of STAs and the unintended consequences of Council policies. There is strong and clear demand to limit STAs, especially in residential areas, to help address housing availability and a call for better enforcement of Council policies on this issue.

6. Governance: There was a strong call to consider tourism governance systems and processes. Potential new arrangements, and clarity over the relationship between Noosa Council, Tourism Noosa and the community are needed.

Priority Issues and potential solutions to be Addressed in a DMP

The following eight issues and potential solutions were identified throughout the various community engagements.

- 1. Traffic Management:** Managing congestion, lack of parking, improving public transport, reducing car dependency through exploring solutions like paid parking, park & ride schemes etc. This came up in almost every conversation and through majority of feedback.
- 2. Environmental Protection:** Strong focus on protecting Noosa Shire's natural assets like forests, rivers, beaches. Emphasis on enhancing sustainability, minimizing tourism impacts, and investigating regenerative approaches.
- 3. Community Values:** Defining and upholding values of the Noosa Shire Community related to environment, congestion, character etc., and clearly communicating expectations to visitors via marketing and promotion. Ideas like a visitor code of conduct or commitment to our place surfaced in multiple conversations.
- 4. Population and Visitor Growth Management:** Concerns about Noosa Shire's carrying capacity and limited infrastructure's ability to handle projected growth in population and visitors. A number of people mentioned the SE QLD plan. Suggestions included capping visitor numbers, visitor dispersal strategies.
- 5. Waste Management:** The need to transition to more sustainable and innovative waste management practices, facilities, and infrastructure; Educating tourists, strengthening compliance of accommodation sector and high use areas etc.
- 6. Youth Engagement:** Providing dedicated activities and facilities for local youth year-round to address boredom and behaviour issues. Enabling youth to stay in the community.
- 7. Community Amenity:** Protecting the lifestyle, amenities and access to the iconic natural sites that make Noosa Shire special for locals. Not allowing tourism impacts to overwhelm community facilities and infrastructure.
- 8. Accommodation:** Concerns over lack of affordable, long-term rentals and student accommodation options. Concerns that Noosa Shire's sense of community is being eroded by STAs in residential areas.

Importantly, the community engagement process also reinforced Noosa Council's approach to developing the Destination Management Plan, which moves away from the traditional, growth-centric, more is better approach to destination management, in favour of a more integrated 'whole of destination stewardship' approach that recognises the community and nature as primary stakeholders in the destination management process.

This approach is a new phenomenon in Australia, but is rapidly gaining favour as a best practice approach amongst destinations that are genuine in their desire for community led response and a more harmonious and sustainable lifestyle.

Noosa Shire has an opportunity to lead Australia in this approach, as it did many years ago in first seeking UNESCO Biosphere Reserve accreditation.

Proposed Next Steps

Given the significant amount of feedback and information received during the consultation process on the Discussion paper and the importance of these issues to Council and the community, it is recommended that;

1. Council note the summary of key issues and themes as outlined in this report and undertake a deep analysis of the data and feedback provided through the recent consultation and use this information over the coming months to inform the preparation of a Draft DMP early to mid 2024.

2. Prepare and implement a communication plan to clearly inform the community of the key themes and issues from the community engagement to date and outline the next steps in the DMP process.

The recent community engagement process on the Discussion Paper was very extensive and resulted in a significant amount of data, feedback and ideas on a range of key issues and opportunities important to our community. Many hours of time and generous ideas and knowledge was shared through the process, it is therefore important and in accordance with our community engagement principles to both thank and acknowledge the community for their input and provide feedback on the findings to date. The development of a communication plan will guide how this occurs over the coming months.

3. Note the Destination Management Plan will be prepared early in 2024 and reported back to Council for further community engagement in mid 2024.

Council officers will work with the Council, the Project Control Group, and the Community Reference Group on the findings of the deep analysis of the community engagement data and the process for preparation of the DMP. The DMP will be reported to Council in early to mid next year for the purposes of further community consultation prior to finalising the plan. The DMP will include a clear set of strategic directions and actions for implementation.

Link to Corporate Plan

The Destination Management Process is aligned with **Theme 4 (Future) of the Corporate Plan, 2023 – 2028**

This theme is focused on our future, strengthening our relationship with First Nations peoples and to ensure our community is prepared and resilient to change. A focus on youth, climate resilience and adaptation, sense of place and destination management.

Objective 4.2 Complete and implement the Destination Management Plan in partnership with the community and Tourism Noosa to protect Noosa's quality of life, environment and iconic places through planning for sustainable tourism and managing visitation and events.

Previous Council Consideration

Noosa Council's commitment to a Destination Management Plan was resolved at an Ordinary Meeting of Council on Thursday 18 November 2021:

FURTHER REPORT - TOURISM FUNDING AGREEMENT REVIEW PROCESS

That Council note the report by the Chief Executive Officer to the Services and Organisation Committee Meeting dated 9 November 2021 and the Further Report by the Acting Chief Executive Officer to the General Committee dated 15 November 2021 regarding the Tourism Noosa Funding Agreement Review Process and

A. Agree to extend the existing funding agreement between Council and Tourism Noosa for a further term of 12 months on and from 1 July 2022 on the same terms and conditions as contained in the existing funding agreement. Noting that Council's funding is aligned to the delivery of:

i. Guiding Principles 1 & 2 "Champion the Brand, influencing improved protection and development of our visitor experience" and " Deliver marketing and promotion which drives propensity for high-value visitation, regional and seasonal dispersal" in the Destination Noosa Strategy 2020-2023; and

ii. The collaborative involvement of Tourism Noosa as one of the stakeholders in the development of a Destination Management framework, including analysis of options for Sustainable Destination Accreditation along the lines of that envisaged in Priority 4 'Elevate Sustainability' of the Tourism Noosa Strategy 2017-2022 .

B. Request the Chief Executive Officer to undertake negotiations for a new funding agreement with Tourism Noosa in the second half of 2022;

C. Note that any new long term funding agreement will not commence until 1 July 2023; and

D. Request the CEO to ensure the agreement is in line with the "Proposed Process" outlined in the Tourism Funding Agreement Review Process Report to the General Committee dated 12 July 2021.

Finance

The preparation and consultation process for the development of the DMP has been funded as part of 23/24 Economic Development budget. A significant amount of feedback and ideas have been received through the consultation process on the DMP Discussion Paper (upwards of 85,000 pieces of information). Consideration of the process and specialist analysis expertise to undertake a deep analysis of this information is currently occurring including whether additional funding may be required.

Risk & Opportunities

The process of developing a DMP presents both risks and opportunities.

From the consultation to date we have heard from the community that they are seeking decisive and timely action on many issues outlined in the DMP Discussion paper. There is a risk for Council if it does not act in a timely or decisive manner throughout the development of the DMP.

The feedback from the community is that is strongly believes that it has been providing feedback on the same issues for many years. Some community members brought copies of previous submissions and summaries of consultations, most recently – the Liveability Survey, the Corporate Plan and Waste Management.

The community is seeking decisive action from Council and this process presents a clear opportunity for Council in how it responds and acts on the feedback provided to date in the preparation of the DMP .

The Noosa community is proud of its legacy as leaders in environmental sustainability. It is proud of being Australia’s first UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, and for being innovative in its approach to sustainable development, its design principles and waste management.

The community understands the importance of the Noosa Plan and the bold leadership that has been required over the years to maintain the look and feel that is quintessentially Noosa.

The community is now seeking bold and transformational leadership from Council in its approach to regenerative destination management, with a clear focus that seeks to require visitors leaving Noosa Shire better than what they found it.

The consultation process provided significant feedback that the community is wanting Council to ensure that in this new regenerative tourism approach, community and nature is always first, and that destination management efforts should ensure that tourism invests back into local places and environments and seeks to improve local liveability, resilience, and a flourishing Noosa Shire.

This presents a great opportunity for Noosa to become world leaders in the regenerative “whole of destination approach” by ensuring community values lead in the DMP and the enabling actions of the plan.

Consultation

External Consultation - Community & Stakeholder

Multiple stakeholder engagements were undertaken during the course of the community engagement exercise including but not limited to - Tourism Noosa, Noosa Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Hastings Street Association, Sunshine Coast Airport, Visit Sunshine Coast, Noosa Junction Association, Cooroy Chamber of Commerce, Pomona Chamber and Business, Kabi Kabi First Nations, Noosa Youth Advisory Group, Good Shepard Lutheran College, Noosa Biosphere Association, World Surfing Reserve and many others.

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Further community engagement and consultation is proposed when the Draft DMP is developed early to mid 2024.

Internal Consultation

Councillor workshops were held both during the preparation of the DMP Discussion Paper and to discuss the summary of findings from the consultation process and next steps.

A meeting was also held with the DMP Project Control Group to discuss the summary of findings of consultation and the next steps. The DMP Project Control Group includes external experts in the field of destination management, tourism, community engagement and project management.

Departments consulted:

Office of the CEO, Mayor & Councillors		Community Services		Corporate Services	
x	Mayor & Councillors	x	Director	x	Director
x	Chief Executive Officer		Community Development		Financial Services
x	Executive Officers	x	Sport & Active Lifestyles		Fleet
x	Community Engagement	x	Arts & Culture		Revenue Services
	People & Culture	x	Community Connection		ICT
x	Governance		Customer Experience	x	Commercial Property
Strategy & Environment & Sustainable Development		Development & Regulation		Infrastructure Services	
x	Director	x	Director	x	Director
x	Strategic Land Use Planning		Development Assessment	x	Infrastructure Planning, Design and Delivery
x	Economic Development & Destination Management		Local Laws		Civil and Asset operations
x	Environmental Services		Environmental Health		Asset Management
	Innovation & Digital Hub		Building & Plumbing		Building & Facilities
		x	Property / Permits		Disaster Management
				x	Waste