



24th May 2021

To whom it may concern,

RE: Letter of support for sea kayak operators in the Byron Shire regarding ongoing licencing fees

Destination North Coast (DNC) is one of six regional tourism entities that have been established to drive the growth of the visitor economy in Regional NSW. Based in Lismore, as the lead tourism agency, Destination North Coast oversees tourism development and management in the region from Mid-Coast to Tweed Heads including Lord Howe Island.

DNC support the Byron Bay sea kayak operators in their request for reduced or deferred licencing fees.

It has been widely noted that regional NSW and destinations like Byron Bay have been inundated with tourists since inter-regional travel was allowed in June 2020. Unfortunately, not all sectors of the industry have experienced the same level of uplift in patronage with many attractions and experience providers, especially those previously targeting international markets, struggling to achieve sales levels that cover their base operational costs.

The state government launched the 'Dine & Discover' program as they recognized the issue. Anecdotal feedback indicates that many of the targeted businesses are not benefiting as targeted. As a result, it remains a big challenge for product such as these to attract and convert sales from the domestic market.

Ensuring product offering such as sea kayaking remain viable throughout this period until international tourist return is vital for the rebuild process. International visitors are an important part of the Byron visitation matrix bringing colour, culture and the exchange of ideas that is vital for such communities.

With the international market down by 98% on previous years there is an obvious void in the market. As stated above the domestic market has mitigated this challenge for many businesses but has not filled the void for the attractions and experience sectors. As the license fees were based on historical revenues any fee imposed during this interim period, until international tourists return, should also reflect the acute decline in earnings.

Based on the important role that the sea kayak operators play in defining Byron Bay as a nature-based destination and their ability to appeal to the international youth market that is crucial for the destination, DNC is supportive of their application for reduced or deferred licencing fees.

Kind regards,

Michael Thurston
General Manager