NORFOLK ISLAND
Regional Council

Service Review – Tourism

Version Control

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Executive Summary

This Service Review examines the Tourism service delivered by Norfolk Island Regional Council with a focus on service scope, financial position and long-term sustainability.

The Tourism service is delivered through an integrated model combining on-island visitor services and digital channels. The Visitor Information Centre operates as the primary customer-facing function, supported by the destination website, Tourism Hub and social media platforms. Destination marketing and content delivery are supported through contracted specialist services with Council retaining responsibility for service coordination, prioritisation, oversight and reporting.

Until 30 June 2025, Tourism Promotion activities were delivered under Service 14 of the Commonwealth Service Delivery Agreement (SDA) with the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts (DITRDCA). This arrangement provided time-limited Commonwealth funding and a formal performance and reporting framework for destination marketing and related activity. The SDA tourism funding was a three-year allocation (2022-23 to 2024-25) approved following external audit findings and concluded on 30 June 2025. No Commonwealth tourism funding is included in the 2025–26 budget.

Financial analysis indicates that Tourism operates as a Council-funded service. The net cost to Council increases from $578,675 in 2024-25 to approximately $1.2 million in 2025-26. Expenditure reflects a mixed delivery model comprising staffing, contracted services, marketing activity and corporate overheads. Operating revenue from visitor services and retail activity offsets a limited proportion of total cost.

Benchmarking against comparable island and remote destinations indicates that destination marketing is commonly delivered through state, regional, independent or industry-led arrangements, with councils more typically focused on visitor services, coordination and local destination support.

The review identifies that the current delivery model places primary operational, financial and oversight responsibility on Council. With tourism now budgeted as Council funded, there is a need to confirm the service scope, delivery boundaries and performance expectations.

The recommendations focus on:

- confirming Council's preferred Tourism service delivery model and role
- confirming the ongoing funding position and associated financial exposure; and
- strengthening oversight and performance reporting arrangements within existing Council reporting practices.

The review does not recommend service expansion or a preferred delivery model. Implementation of any recommendations is subject to Council decision-making, funding availability and prioritisation and would be progressed through Council's planning, budgeting and reporting processes.

Contents

1. Service Review Scope and Purpose

This Service Review examines the Tourism service delivered by Norfolk Island Regional Council (NIRC). It forms part of Council's broader Service Review Program, which provides a structured process for understanding the scope, cost and delivery of Council services and how they are funded.

Until 30 June 2025, Tourism Promotion activities were delivered under Service 14 – Tourism Promotion of the Commonwealth Service Delivery Agreement (SDA) between the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts (DITRDCA) and Council. Under this arrangement, Council received $400,000 in 2024–25 as the final year of a three-year funding commitment to support destination marketing, visitor services and industry development activities aligned with the Norfolk Island Tourism Industry Strategy 2024–2027.

The SDA included defined performance and reporting requirements, including quarterly reporting to DITRDCA on activity delivery, digital performance, visitor data and matters raised through Council's governance processes.

Within this context, the review considers the Tourism service as delivered by Council, including its scope, delivery arrangements and financial position. It also considers the service outlook over time in relation to funding arrangements and service responsibilities.

The review draws on operational information, SDA reporting, tourism strategy documents, Council planning documents and staff insights available at the time of review.

This Service Review does not reassess tourism strategy or measure progress against strategic initiatives. Its purpose is to describe the Tourism service delivered by Council and to inform consideration of its future delivery and funding within the strategic direction set by the adopted Tourism Industry Strategy.

2. Service Summary

- **Service Name:** Tourism
- **Service Paid By:**
    - **2024-25** - Commonwealth funding supported Tourism Promotion activities only. Visitor services, staffing and operations continued to be Council funded.
    - **2025-26:** The service is budgeted as Council funded. No Commonwealth SDA funding is included for Tourism.
- **Responsible NIRC Division:** Customer Care
- **Responsible Manager:** Manager Customer Care
- **Review Period:** November 2025

Core Functions

- **Destination Marketing and Brand Management** - campaign planning and delivery across digital, print and media channels to position Norfolk Island as a boutique South Pacific destination.
- **Visitor Services and Information Provision –** operation of the Visitor Information Centre, providing on-island assistance, bookings, and itinerary support.
- **Industry and Trade Engagement –** liaison with tourism operators, airlines and wholesalers
- **Market Research and Analytics –** tracking visitor numbers, digital reach and booking patterns to inform marketing investment decisions.
- **Community and Stakeholder Engagement –**collaboration with local tourism operators and industry stakeholders to inform service planning and delivery.

Staffing Profile

The service is delivered by a small on-island team:

- 2 Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs)
- 1 Part-Time staff member
- 3 casuals

Specialist marketing support and creative services are procured externally through approved contractors or campaign-specific agreements.

Key Assets

- Visitor Information Centre (VIC)- facility used for visitor services and retail sales
- Tourism Hub (online industry platform)
- Official destination website and social media accounts
- Digital marketing collateral, media library and brand assets

3. Strategic Alignment

This Service Review outlines how the Tourism service aligns with Council's long-term strategic intent and medium-term delivery commitments.

Community Strategic Plan 2016-2026
Tourism delivery aligns with Direction 3 - A Successful and Diverse Economy, in particular:

- Objective 5 - Our community is a great place to live and visit.

The Tourism service contributes to this objective by:

- positioning Norfolk Island as a distinctive, sustainable and culturally rich visitor destination.
- supporting local employment and business activity through visitor demand; and
- promoting experiences that reflect the Island's heritage, environment and community values.

Delivery Program 2022-2026
This positions Council as an enabler and coordinator of tourism activity rather than a direct tourism operator.

Key areas of focus include:

- destination marketing and visitor services that reflect Norfolk Island's identity and values
- communication, coordination and capability-building across the local tourism industry
- partnership management with airlines, travel trade and media; and
- initiatives aimed at improving visitor yield, dispersal and length of stay rather than volume growth.

Norfolk Island Tourism Industry Strategy 2024-2027
The Tourism service operates within the strategic direction set by the Norfolk Island Tourism Industry Strategy 2024–2027 (refer Section 4).

Economic development planning
Tourism is also embedded within Council's broader economic development planning, as reflected in the Norfolk Island Tourism Strategic Plan 2024–2027 and related documents published by NIRC.

4. Operational Priorities 2025 – 2026

The adopted 2025–2026 Operational Plan identifies the following Tourism-related actions under Ref 3.10. These actions describe operational focus for the year and establish defined measures and targets.

Ref	2025–26 Action	Measure	2025–26 Target	Responsibility
3.10.1	Continue to implement scheduled activities of the Norfolk Island Tourism Strategy 2024–2027 and marketing plan, including providing quarterly updates of Strategy implementation progress to Council	% of scheduled actions arising from the review commenced	**At least 90%**	Tourism Team
		Number of airline passengers and visitors	**At least 30,000**	Tourism Team
		Number of destination website views and social media followers	**At least 312,000 views and 65,000 followers**	Tourism Team
3.10.2	In collaboration with the tourism industry stakeholders, facilitate the delivery of local events which showcase music, food, culture and sport	Number of events held	**At least 1**	Tourism Team / Industry stakeholders
3.10.3	Prepare, publish and promote an annual calendar of community events	Events calendar update frequency	**Monthly**	Tourism Team
3.10.4	Facilitate meetings and discussions between Council and local tourism industry stakeholders, including recruitment of an Economic/Community Development role in NIRC	Number of meetings held	**At least 4**	Tourism Team

3.10.5	Develop and implement an online Tourism Survey in consultation with the tourism industry stakeholders to hear visitor feedback and determine industry needs	Survey available online	**By 31 July 2025**	Tourism Team Communications Officer
		Number of survey responses received	**At least 150**	
3.10.7	Promote local artists' work through displays in the Visitor Information Centre	Number of local artists represented in VIC displays	**At least 5**	Tourism Team
3.10.8	As part of a program of ongoing improvements and identifying efficiencies, conduct a review of Tourism services	Review complete	**By 30 June 2026**	Manager Customer Care

5. Norfolk Island Tourism Industry Strategy 2024-2027

The Norfolk Island Tourism Industry Strategy 2024-2027 sets the strategic direction for tourism on Norfolk Island over a three-year period. It was developed through community and industry consultation and provides an agreed framework to guide tourism activity across the Island.

The Strategy is an industry strategy rather than a Council service plan. It identifies indicative initiative owners and lead roles, with implementation and resourcing to be considered through governance and funding processes over time.

Strategic Direction

The Strategy seeks to position Norfolk Island as a boutique South Pacific destination for high-value, low-impact visitors. It emphasises visitor experience, authenticity, sustainability, culture and heritage. Key themes include improving visitor yield rather than volume, diversifying visitor segments over time and strengthening alignment between tourism, community values and the natural environment.

Staged Approach to Growth

The Strategy adopts a staged approach across three years. The staged approach reflects intent and sequencing rather than a fixed delivery program.

Year 1 (2024-2025): Basic Foundations
Focus on building foundational capability. This includes improved data and insights, a shared understanding of the visitor experience, stronger industry coordination and early planning activity.

Year 2 (2025-2026): Innovate and Diversify
Focus on evolving and diversifying visitor experiences. This includes arts, culture, history, events, eco-tourism and nature-based activities, as well as review of key public tourism services and visitor touchpoints.

Year 3 (2026-2027): Nurture and Grow
Focus on consolidation and optimisation. This includes embedding successful initiatives, modernising heritage tourism where appropriate, refining destination marketing and preparing for the next tourism strategy.

Funding Context

The Strategy does not identify guaranteed funding for implementation. It recognises that delivery is dependent on available resources, partnerships and governance decisions.

The Strategy notes that:

- some activities may be delivered within existing operational capacity
- other initiatives may require external funding such government programs or grants; and
- some actions rely on industry led or collaborative effort rather than Council funding.

6. Service Delivery Channels

The Tourism service delivers visitor engagement through a combination of on-island and digital channels. Together, the Visitor Information Centre (VIC) and online platforms support visitor services, destination marketing and industry support. These channels support consistent use of the brand across touchpoints and provide visitors and operators with current, accessible information.

Visitor Information Centre (VIC)

The Visitor Information Centre (VIC) is the primary public access point for visitors and plays a central role in providing on-island visitor services and retail support. It functions as a hub for visitor enquiries, bookings and information and supports engagement with local tourism operators.

Role and Function

The VIC provides face-to-face visitor assistance, bookings, retail sales and product information. It is the main customer-facing interface that complements Council's coordination, reporting and contracted marketing delivery.

Tourism staff manage the centre under the Customer Care division and are supported by additional casual staff during peak periods.

Refurbishment and Creative Integration

In 2024, internal refurbishment was undertaken to create gallery space for local artisans. This expanded the VIC's retail and display capacity and provided opportunities to showcase local creative work.

The establishment of the Awus Art Gallery within the VIC supports visitor engagement with local art and aligns with the Tourism Strategy's focus on storytelling, culture and place-based experiences. The gallery was formally opened in early 2025 as a permanent feature of the VIC.

Expansion of Services

By mid-2025, the VIC expanded its service offering to include hire of items such as snorkelling sets, e-pushbikes and e-mopeds. These services support visitor convenience and assist visitors to access on-island experiences, while complementing existing tourism operators.

Strategic Importance

The VIC functions as a key delivery mechanism within Norfolk Island Tourism's operating model. It:

- provides visitor information, bookings and retail sales
- showcases local art and craft through the Awus Art Gallery
- supports collection of visitor feedback and service insights
- supports marketing activity through on-site promotion and visitor communication
- maintains visible alignment with the tourism brand

Online Platforms

Online platforms are a core channel for destination marketing, visitor information and industry support. They connect off-island audiences with local operators and enable cost-effective distribution of destination information.

Destination Website

The destination website is the primary platform for visitor information, trip planning and brand presentation. The website was rebuilt to modernise design, improve navigation and strengthen analytics and Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) capability. The updated site aligns with the brand identity and provides access to destination content, operator listings and event information.

Tourism Hub

The Tourism Hub provides an online portal for tourism operators and industry partners. It supports access to shared resources, updates and campaign toolkits. The 2025–26 Operational Plan identifies continued maintenance and content expansion of the Hub as a key operational priority.

Social media and Campaign Channels

Tourism maintains active accounts across Facebook, Instagram and TikTok. Destination marketing activity, content production and campaign execution are supported through contracted specialist services delivered under an ongoing monthly service arrangement. This arrangement provides continuity of marketing capability, access to specialist skills and support for campaign planning, content development and digital channel management. Council retains responsibility for brand stewardship, channel governance, prioritisation of activity and oversight of performance and reporting.

Brand and Content Assets

A media library, image bank and brand templates are maintained under the brand guidelines. These assets support consistency across digital and print channels and are shared with operators through established channels, including the Tourism Hub.

Performance and Data

Digital performance is tracked through analytics dashboards covering website traffic, campaign reach and social media engagement. These metrics support internal monitoring and reporting and provide evidence to inform service planning and improvement.

7. Service Delivery Agreement (SDA) - Status and Implications

SDA Background and Scope

Until 30 June 2025, Tourism Promotion activities were delivered by Council under Service 14 – Tourism Promotion of the Commonwealth Service Delivery Agreement (SDA) with the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts (DITRDCA).

Under this arrangement, Council received $400,000 in 2024-25 under the SDA as the final year of a three-year Commonwealth funding commitment announced in the 2022–23 Federal Budget. The funding supported tourism promotion and industry engagement activities aligned with the Norfolk Island Tourism Industry Strategy and associated marketing plans.

The SDA established a formal performance and reporting framework for Tourism Promotion. This included quarterly reporting on campaign delivery, digital performance, visitor statistics, airline and wholesaler data and industry engagement.

While the SDA provided partial funding for Tourism Promotion, Council continued to fund and deliver other elements of the Tourism service outside the SDA. This included trade relationships and destination marketing, staffing, visitor services, operation of the Visitor Information Centre, facilities, retail activity and corporate overheads.

SDA Cessation

The SDA funding allocation for Tourism Promotion concluded on 30 June 2025. There is no Commonwealth funding provided for Tourism under the SDA in 2025–26. The formal Commonwealth funding and reporting framework that previously applied to Tourism Promotion is no longer in place.

Cost Implications

The conclusion of the SDA results in the following considerations for the Tourism function:

- **Funding certainty**
  Tourism Promotion activities previously supported through a time-limited Commonwealth funding arrangement are now delivered without a dedicated external funding source. This increases Council's direct financial exposure.
- **Oversight and reporting**
  The cessation of SDA reporting removes a structured external reporting framework. Council is now responsible for determining appropriate internal oversight and performance monitoring arrangements.
- **Service scale and prioritisation**
  Tourism activities have continued following the end of the SDA. In the absence of external tourism funding, decisions about service scope resourcing and prioritisation have a greater direct financial impact on Council.

At the time of this review, Tourism activities continue under Council's operational arrangements. This position has ongoing operating cost implications and requires consideration alongside other service funding priorities.

8. Quantitative Analysis

This section summarises the Tourism service's financial position based on Council's 2024-25 Actuals and 2025-26 Budget. Figures reflect Council's 2024–25 actuals and 2025–26 budget for the Tourism Bureau and related tourism promotion activity recorded in Council's financial systems

The analysis incorporates expenditure and revenue recorded under:

- Tourism Bureau
- Adhoc & Demand Driven – Tourism Promotion which includes SDA related revenue in 2024-25.

Financial Summary - Tourism Bureau

The table below provides a two-year comparison of actual and budgeted expenditure, revenue and depreciation for the Tourism Bureau.

Category	FY 2024-25 Actuals	FY 2025-26 Budget
Operating Expenditure	$822,757	$1,400,864
Operating Revenue	($253,363)	($212,076)
Depreciation	$9,280	$9,209
Net Cost to Council	**$578,675**	**$1,197,997**

SDA-Related Tourism Promotion

In 2024 -25, additional tourism promotion activity was recorded under Adhoc & Demand Driven - Tourism Promotion with partial offset from the SDA revenue. This line item does not continue into the 2025-26 budget.

Category	FY 2024-25 Actuals	FY 2025-26 Budget
Operating Expenditure	$509,087	$0
Operating Revenue - SDA	($400,000)	$0
Net Cost to Council	**$109,087**	**$0**

2025-26 Budget Breakdown

Category	2025–26 Budget ($)
Operating Revenue	
Fees & Charges (Tourism sales)	(200,000)
Other Revenue (sundry sales and income)	(12,076)
Total Operating Revenue	**(212,076)**
Employee Costs	
Salaries and wages	242,809
Overtime and casual wages	75,758
Superannuation and allowances	39,053
Total Employee Costs	**357,620**
Materials & Services	
Contractors	246,000
Trading stock purchase	120,000
Other materials and consumables	7,528
Total Materials & Services	**373,528**
Other Operating Expenses	
Advertising expenses	250,000
Trade shows and representation	75,000
Subscriptions, commissions and utilities	80,407
Total Other Expenses	**405,407**
Depreciation	
Depreciation – buildings	9,209
Total Depreciation	**9,209**
Corporate Overheads	
Overheads charged	264,309
Total Corporate Overheads	**264,309**

Category	2025–26 Budget ($)
Total Operating Expenditure	**1,410,073**
Net Cost to Council	**1,197,997**

Budget breakdown and cost profile

The 2025-26 Tourism Bureau budget reflects the cost of delivering visitor services, destination marketing and retail activity within a fully Council-funded operating model.

The expenditure profile shows costs distributed across three main components: employee costs, materials and services, and other operating expenses, with corporate overheads representing a further fixed allocation. Employee costs ($357,620) and materials and services ($373,528) are of a similar scale, indicating a service model that combines direct staffing with contracted inputs and purchased services.

Employee costs relate primarily to operation of the Visitor Information Centre and coordination of tourism activity across on-island and digital channels. These costs support daily service delivery, visitor engagement and coordination functions.

Materials and services expenditure include contractor support, trading stock and consumables. This reflects reliance on external capability for specialist functions and the operation of retail activity alongside visitor services.

Other operating expenses, including advertising, trade representation and subscriptions, represent a further significant cost component and are directly associated with destination marketing activity and industry engagement.

Corporate overheads are allocated under Council's standard cost allocation methodology and represent a fixed component of service cost that is not directly influenced by changes in service activity levels.

Revenue is limited to tourism sales and sundry income and does not materially offset operating costs. No Commonwealth tourism funding is included in the 2025–26 budget.

Overall, the budget reflects a mixed delivery model in which staffing, contracted services and marketing activity all contribute materially to the cost of the Tourism service, with total expenditure now borne by Council following the conclusion of Commonwealth funding.

Financial Observations

- Operating expenditure increases by approximately 70 per cent in 2025–26 as Tourism delivery transitions to a fully Council funded service.
- Operating revenue declines from $253,363 to $212,076 due to limited retail income and the absence of Commonwealth funding.
- Depreciation remains stable and immaterial relative to total operating cost.
- The net cost to Council increases from $578,675 in 2024-25 to $1,197,997 in 2025-26.

9. Tourism Service Funding and Cost Recovery Considerations

This section describes the funding characteristics of Tourism service activities delivered by Council. It distinguishes between core functions that are publicly funded by design and discretionary visitor-facing activities that may provide limited opportunity to offset operating costs.

The purpose of this section is to support understanding of the Tourism service cost profile and funding drivers. It does not represent a funding decision, pricing framework or commitment to cost recovery. Tourism services delivered by local government are typically funded on a mixed public service basis rather than structured to achieve full cost recovery.

Indicative Cost Recovery Classification

The table below provides an indicative classification of Tourism service activities by funding and cost recovery characteristics.

Note: Cost recovery refers to partial or supplementary offset of operating costs and does not imply full cost recovery or profit generation.

Tourism Activity	**Funding Classification**	**Rationale**
Visitor Information Centre – retail sales	Partially cost-recoverable	Discretionary purchases with a direct private benefit. Retail revenue may offset some operating costs but is constrained by staffing, inventory risk and seasonality.
Hire services (e-mopeds, snorkelling equipment and similar)	Partially cost-recoverable	Transactional services with a clear user benefit. Fees may recover consumables, depreciation and some staffing costs but are unlikely to cover full overheads.
Optional premium digital features (e.g. featured listings, sponsored placements)	Supplementary cost recovery only	Opt-in services with identifiable business benefit. Revenue potential is limited by scale, neutrality expectations and reputational considerations.
Core visitor services (walk-in assistance, information provision, basic bookings support)	Publicly funded	Public good services with universal access expectations. Charging would create barriers and undermine visitor services objectives.
Destination marketing (baseline activity)	Publicly funded	Delivers collective destination benefit.

Destination brand stewardship	Publicly funded	Whole-of-destination function requiring consistency and neutrality. Not suited to commercialisation.
Industry coordination and engagement	Publicly funded	System-level coordination role supporting the tourism sector. Monetisation would compromise participation and credibility.
Data collection, reporting and performance monitoring	Publicly funded	Required for Council oversight, planning and accountability rather than user-paid service delivery.
Strategic planning and alignment with the Tourism Industry Strategy	Publicly funded	Governance and stewardship function undertaken on behalf of the community.

10. Benchmarking

Benchmarking was undertaken to provide comparative context for Norfolk Island Regional Council's Tourism service using publicly available information only. It examines how similar Australian regional and island-based destinations structure, fund and deliver tourism activity.

The selected comparators are Lord Howe Island (NSW), Flinders Island (TAS), King Island (TAS), Christmas Island (WA) and Paroo Shire Council (QLD). These locations share key characteristics with Norfolk Island including geographic isolation, small resident populations and reliance on government-led or council-supported tourism delivery models.

The benchmarking focuses on governance arrangements, funding levels, service delivery channels and the availability of performance information rather than on tourism outcomes or service effectiveness. Tourism outcomes are not benchmarked due to differences in destination objectives, data availability and measurement approaches across comparator locations

Benchmarking Snapshot

The table below summarises publicly available information on governance arrangements, funding sources for 2024-25 where explicitly reported, service delivery channels and the type of campaign or performance information disclosed by comparator destinations.

Location	Governance / Delivery Model	Funding and Source (2024-25)	Service Delivery Channels	Campaign Management / Public Metrics
Norfolk Island (NIRC)	Local government under Commonwealth administration; tourism delivered under SDA Service 14	Council-funded tourism service, with $400,000 Commonwealth contribution for tourism promotion via DITRDCA Service Delivery Agreement (2024–25 only)	Visitor Information Centre (7 days), destination website, Tourism Hub and social media platforms	Campaign and digital performance reported through SDA quarterly reports, including campaign reach and website engagement
Lord Howe Island (NSW)	Statutory Board under NSW Department of Environment and Heritage	NSW Government funding provided to the Lord Howe Island Board (tourism not reported as a standalone budget line)	Visitor services and sustainability managed by the Board; marketing supported through NSW Government tourism channels	Visitor cap used as a primary management and sustainability indicator; limited publicly reported campaign metrics
Flinders Island (TAS)	Flinders Council operating within Tasmania's regional tourism framework	Council funding supplemented by state tourism programs (tourism funding not separately disclosed)	Limited on-island visitor services; destination marketing delivered through Tourism Tasmania	Participation in state-led campaigns; local campaign metrics not publicly reported

King Island (TAS)	Local government with independent Brand Management Group	Council-funded tourism activity administered through Brand Management Group arrangements	Part-time Visitor Information Centre. marketing coordinated with Tourism Tasmania	Tourism Strategy 2023–26 adopted; KPI framework identified but not yet publicly reported
Christmas Island (WA)	Commonwealth-administered territory; tourism coordinated through Indian Ocean Territories RDO	Commonwealth funding administered through Indian Ocean Territories arrangements (tourism funding not published as a discrete annual allocation)	Visitor services via local tourism association; marketing coordinated with Tourism WA	Strategic actions identified in published plans; limited publicly available campaign metrics
Paroo Shire (QLD)	Rural council working with a regional tourism organisation	Council funding supplemented by regional tourism partnership support (tourism budget reported at a high level only)	Seasonal visitor information centre; regional marketing through Outback Queensland Tourism Association	Draft Tourism Strategic Plan proposes future tracking of visitor data and campaign reach

Source: NIRC SDA 2024-25; Lord Howe Island Board Annual Reports and Budgets; Tourism Tasmania publicly released campaign materials; King Island Tourism Strategy 2023-26; Indian Ocean Territories RDO Strategic Plan (most recent published); Paroo Shire Draft Tourism Strategic Plan 202-–30.

Note: Where destinations do not publish discrete annual tourism funding or campaign metrics, information is presented at a high level to avoid inference.

Benchmarking Findings and Analysis

The benchmarking indicates that tourism services across comparable regional and island-based destinations are delivered through a range of governance and funding arrangements. Key observations include:

- In 2024-25, Norfolk Island's tourism activity was partly supported by Commonwealth funding of $400,000 under the Service Delivery Agreement and was supported by Council operational expenditure. Other comparator destinations receive tourism funding through state government programs, council budgets or regional tourism organisations, with funding generally reported at a high level rather than as discrete tourism programs.
- The 2025-26 budget position for Norfolk Island reflects a shift to Council-funded tourism delivery following the end of SDA support. In many comparator locations, tourism activity continues to be supported through ongoing state or regional tourism frameworks rather than direct council funding.

- In most comparator destinations, destination marketing is coordinated through state tourism bodies, regional organisations or independent arrangements, with councils primarily focused on visitor services, coordination and local engagement rather than direct campaign delivery.
- Norfolk Island does not operate within a state tourism framework. As a result, Council undertakes a broader range of tourism functions than is typical for local government, including activities that are delivered by state or regional tourism organisations in other jurisdictions.
- Public reporting of tourism activity varies across comparator destinations. Many publish limited information, often focused on visitor numbers, sustainability measures or strategic actions rather than detailed campaign or digital performance data.
- Norfolk Island has historically combined direct delivery of visitor services and destination marketing with structured performance reporting through the SDA framework, providing a clear view of tourism activity while placing greater responsibility on Council for delivery and resourcing.

Overall, the benchmarking provides context for understanding Norfolk Island's tourism service within the broader landscape of regional and island destinations and informs consideration of service scope, funding arrangements and Council's ongoing role.

11. Asset Management

The Tourism service manages a limited portfolio of physical and digital assets that support visitor services, destination marketing and industry engagement. These assets comprise facilities, digital platforms, ICT systems and brand materials rather than major infrastructure.

The assets support service delivery within Council's existing operational and ICT arrangements.

Asset Overview

The table below summarises the key physical and digital assets used in delivery of the Tourism service. The information is descriptive only and is intended to provide visibility of the types of assets in use. It does not assess asset condition, performance, compliance or lifecycle requirements.

Asset Category	Description	Notes
Visitor Information Centre (VIC)	Primary point for visitor services and retail sale. Includes booking systems, displays and retail stock.	Used for delivery of visitor services and retail activity.
Tourism Hub (Online Platform)	Central online information and resource portal for tourism operators.	Used to support industry communication and access to shared resources.
Destination Website	Official visitor website hosting destination content, itineraries and booking links.	Used for destination information, trip planning and digital engagement.
Digital Marketing Infrastructure	Campaign assets, media library, image and video content and analytics tools.	Used to support destination marketing activity and performance reporting.
Brand and Creative Assets	Brand guidelines, templates and promotional collateral.	Applied across digital and print channels to support consistent brand presentation.
Visitor Hire Equipment	Small-scale hire items offered through the Visitor Information Centre, including snorkelling sets, e-pushbikes and e-mopeds.	Used to support visitor access to on-island experiences as part of visitor services.
ICT Equipment and Software	Computers, booking systems and communication tools supporting the Tourism team.	Used to support day-to-day service delivery.

12. Operational Activity and Qualitative Analysis

This section provides a qualitative overview of the Tourism service's operational activity. It is informed by a review of typical day-to-day tasks and staff insights. It focuses on how the service operates in practice and the nature of the work undertaken. It does not assess individual performance or workload efficiency.

Operational Observations and Process Review

Tourism operations combine visitor-facing service delivery with destination marketing coordination and industry engagement. Activity occurs across both physical and digital channels and includes a mix of planned work and demand-driven tasks.

Operational processes are generally informal and adaptive, reflecting the small team environment and the need to respond to fluctuating visitor demand. Core activities include visitor enquiries and bookings through the Visitor Information Centre, coordination of marketing and content updates, liaison with tourism operators and partners, and routine administrative and reporting tasks.

Processes are often interdependent, with staff moving between front-of-house service delivery and back-of-house coordination and content work within the same day. This integrated approach supports service continuity but relies on staff flexibility rather than clearly segmented roles.

DILO Reflections and Staff Insights

A review of typical "day in the life" activity indicates that Tourism staff balance a wide range of tasks across a normal working day. Visitor services activities are interspersed with marketing coordination, digital content updates, stakeholder communication and reporting requirements.

Staff insights highlight that work patterns vary depending on seasonality, flight schedules and campaign activity. Peak visitor periods increase front-of-house demand, while active campaign phases increase coordination, content and reporting tasks.

The DILO reflections indicate that the service operates as a multi-function team, with staff frequently shifting priorities to manage competing demands. This flexibility is a key feature of current operations but can limit capacity for longer-term planning or process refinement during busy periods.

Operational Constraints and Themes

Several recurring operational themes emerge from the qualitative review:

- **Task diversity and role overlap**
  Staff undertake a broad mix of visitor services, marketing and coordination tasks with limited role separation.
- **Demand variability**
  Visitor services demand fluctuates daily and seasonally which affects the ability to schedule marketing and coordination work consistently.

- **Reliance on external capability**
  Specialist marketing and creative activities are supported through external providers, requiring ongoing coordination and oversight by Council staff.
- **Limited surge capacity**
  The small team structure limits the ability to absorb sustained peaks in demand without deferring non-urgent activities.
- **Transition impacts**
  The shift away from SDA funded operations has increased the importance of prioritisation and internal coordination as Council assumes greater responsibility for tourism delivery.

13. Current Service Delivery Model

This section describes the current service delivery model for Tourism, including how responsibilities are structured between Council staff, external specialist support and customer-facing operations. It is descriptive in nature and does not assess the effectiveness of individual providers or delivery arrangements.

Key Characteristics

Key characteristics of the current service delivery model include:

- a high level of Council involvement in operational and customer-facing activity
- delivery of visitor services, retail and marketing within a single service model
- reliance on external expertise for specialist marketing capability; and
- exposure to day-to-day operational demands and seasonal variation

Service Delivery Structure

The Tourism service is delivered through a hybrid operating model that combines internal Council capability, external specialist support and direct customer-facing service delivery. Council retains overall responsibility for governance, coordination, reporting and visitor services while specialist marketing and creative activities are supported through external arrangements.

Core elements of the current service delivery model include:

- **Council-led coordination and oversight**
  Council staff are responsible for service planning, prioritisation and coordination of activity. This includes management of the Visitor Information Centre, oversight of visitor services and retail activity, industry engagement and reporting against strategic and operational requirements.
- **Direct customer-facing service delivery**
  The Tourism service operates a public-facing Visitor Information Centre that provides visitor assistance, bookings and retail sales. This function represents a visible point of contact with visitors and requires daily staffing, customer service and operational management.
- **Brand stewardship**
  Consistent application of the tourism brand across visitor touchpoints, marketing activity and digital platforms, in line with the adopted Tourism Strategy.
- **Industry support and coordination**
  Support for local tourism operators through coordination of campaigns, information sharing, access to digital platforms and industry coordination through established engagement mechanisms and operational collaboration.
- **Partnership and representation functions**
  Coordination with airlines, travel trade, media and government partners to support destination promotion, visitor access and market engagement.
- **External specialist support**
  Destination marketing, campaign execution and creative services are supported through

external providers engaged by Council. These arrangements supplement internal capability and provide access to specialist skills not maintained in-house.

- **Integrated delivery across channels**
  Visitor services, retail activity, digital platforms and marketing campaigns are delivered as an integrated service. On-island engagement through the Visitor Information Centre is aligned with off-island marketing and digital communications to ensure consistent messaging and brand presentation.

Roles and Responsibilities

Under the current model:

- Council sets strategic direction through the adopted Tourism Strategy and annual operational priorities.
- Council staff manage day-to-day operations including visitor services, retail activity, coordination of marketing activity.
- External providers deliver defined marketing and creative outputs under Council direction and oversight.
- Performance and activity information is collected and reviewed by Council to support reporting and planning.

This model reflects the broader role currently undertaken by Council in tourism delivery.

14. Risk and Compliance Assessment

This section summarises the key risk and compliance areas relevant to the Tourism service, based on Council's corporate risk register and the nature of Tourism's customer-facing and operational activities. It does not introduce new risks but identifies how existing Council risks apply to Tourism service delivery.

Key Risks

Based on the current risk register, three risks are directly relevant to Tourism service delivery. All are assessed as Low under Council's corporate risk framework and are managed through existing controls.

Destination marketing effectiveness
There is a risk that destination marketing activity may not achieve intended outcomes. This reflects reliance on external marketing capability to support destination awareness with trade and consumers. Controls include regular coordination, monitoring of delivery and performance reporting. The risk is rated Low and assessed as substantially effective.

Health and safety at Council-run tourism events
There is a risk of safety or other incidents occurring at events organised by Tourism. This risk is managed through Council risk policies, procedures and permitting systems, with periodic review of event procedures. The risk is rated Low.

Flooding of the Visitor Information Centre
There is a risk of service disruption at the Visitor Information Centre during periods of heavy rainfall. Mitigation measures have included building works and drainage modifications, with ongoing monitoring of runoff and drainage. The risk is rated Low.

Compliance Obligations

The Tourism service operates within Council's existing compliance framework, including:

- work health and safety obligations associated with public-facing facilities and events
- compliance with Council risk management policies and procedures; and
- adherence to operational controls relevant to customer service and facility management.

No Tourism specific compliance breaches or elevated risks are identified in the current risk register.

15. Findings

This section summarises key findings from the operational review, asset assessment, staff insights, financial analysis and benchmarking. The findings describe current strengths and constraints affecting the delivery and longer-term sustainability of the Tourism service.

Strengths observed (what's working well)

- The service model integrates visitor services and destination marketing through a single operational team and a central Visitor Information Centre presence.
- Established digital channels support destination communications and off-island engagement.
- The brand framework supports consistency across visitor communications.
- The team operates as a flexible multi-function unit that supports day-to-day service continuity across visitor services, coordination and marketing support.

Challenges Identified

Funding

- The Tourism funding allocation under the SDA has concluded. Tourism delivery now relies largely on Council funding.

Service delivery model

- Tourism delivery by Council is not a statutory local government function and represents a discretionary service role assumed by Council in the absence of state or regional tourism bodies. This highlights ongoing considerations for service scope and funding.
- Council undertakes a broader range of tourism functions than is typical in jurisdictions supported by state or regional tourism bodies. The service combines visitor services, retail activity and destination marketing within a single operating model.
- Delivery of destination marketing activity includes reliance on external specialist capability, which requires coordination across internal and external parties.

16. Opportunities

This section identifies opportunities arising from the findings of this review. The opportunities are intended to support service sustainability, clarify Council's role and inform future decision making. They do not commit Council to specific actions.

Short Term Opportunities (0-12 months)

The below short-term opportunities focus on stabilising the Tourism service following the conclusion of Commonwealth funding. They are intended to provide clarity on funding, service scope and governance, and to support continued service delivery within existing Council arrangements.

Initiative	Indicative Cost	Indicative Benefit	Implementation Notes
Opportunity to confirm the Tourism service delivery model and scope of activities delivered by Council	Internal resources	Improves role clarity and manages service expectations	Confirm Council's role in delivering the Tourism service
Opportunity to clarify the ongoing funding position for the Tourism service	Internal resources	Improves financial certainty and short-term planning	Considered through financial planning processes

Medium Term Opportunities (12-36 months)

The medium-term opportunities focus on embedding governance and strengthening performance oversight once the funding position is clear.

Initiative	Indicative Cost	Indicative Benefit	Implementation Notes
Opportunity to establish an internal governance and performance framework for Tourism.	Internal resources	Improves oversight and accountability	Can replace the former SDA assurance layer and align with Council reporting

Longer Term Opportunities (Beyond 36 months)

The longer-term opportunities focus on future positioning of Council's role in tourism delivery. They are intended to inform strategic consideration of Council's ongoing involvement in tourism, subject to future funding, governance arrangements and industry context.

Initiative	**Indicative Cost**	**Indicative Benefit**	**Implementation Notes**
Opportunity to assess the potential for industry led destination marketing arrangements with public oversight	To be determined	May reduce long-term delivery burden while maintaining neutrality and brand integrity	Council role focused on brand stewardship, standards and oversight, subject to industry capability
Opportunity to inform development of the next Tourism Industry Strategy from a service delivery perspective	Internal resources	Improves alignment between strategy and service delivery experience	Focus on Council service lessons, delivery constraints and funding realities

17. Tourism Service Delivery Models

This section outlines potential service delivery models for Norfolk Island Regional Council's Tourism function. The models are informed by the current operating context, the cessation of Commonwealth funding, the Tourism Industry Strategy 2024-2027 and benchmarking of comparable island destinations. Broader trends in tourism governance are also considered.

It builds on the current service delivery model described in Section 12 and presents alternative tourism service delivery models used in comparable remote and island destinations.

The models are provided for consideration only. They do not represent recommendations.

Context for Model Consideration

Norfolk Island's tourism context is structurally different from most Australian regional destinations. The Island does not operate within a state tourism framework and Council has historically undertaken a broader tourism role than is typical for local government including visitor services, destination marketing, destination stewardship and industry coordination.

The conclusion of Commonwealth funding under the Service Delivery Agreement has changed the funding and assurance environment. Tourism delivery is now largely Council funded, with a net cost to Council of approximately $1.2 million in 2025-26. Destination marketing and associated specialist support represent a significant component of this cost profile, increasing the importance of clearly defining Council's service role, delivery boundaries and operating model.

The Norfolk Island Tourism Industry Strategy provides strategic direction and identifies indicative initiative owners and funding sources across Council, industry and collaborative arrangements. Implementation and resourcing are intended to be considered through governance and funding processes over time rather than through a fixed delivery program.

In many remote and island destinations, tourism delivery is commonly structured within broader destination or island governance systems rather than as a standalone council service. In these contexts, local government typically retains visitor services, coordination and place-based functions, with destination marketing delivered through regional, state, independent or industry-led arrangements.

Within this context, consideration of alternative service delivery models provides a basis for assessing Council's ongoing role in tourism delivery, the level of direct operational involvement, and the financial and governance implications over the medium to long term.

Service Delivery Model Overview

The table below summarises common tourism service delivery models used in remote and island destinations. It outlines how tourism functions are typically delivered, the role played by local government and the relative level of funding exposure. Location examples illustrate prevailing practice only and are not intended to represent formal or exclusive governance arrangements.

The models are illustrative and do not imply preferred or recommended approaches. Examples reflect publicly described arrangements at the time of review.

Model	Primary delivery role	Council role	Funding exposure	Location examples
Council-led integrated service	Visitor services and destination marketing delivered by Council	Direct service delivery, governance and funding	High	Norfolk Island (current)
Council-led visitor services with outsourced marketing	Visitor services delivered by Council; destination marketing delivered through state frameworks and contracted arrangements	Visitor services, place management, destination, stewardship, contract oversight and funding	Moderate to high	Kangaroo Island
Independent destination organisation	Destination marketing and industry coordination delivered by a dedicated destination body	Funding contributions, strategic oversight and assurance	Potentially reduced over time	Lord Howe Island, Whitsundays
Regional or national partnerships	Destination marketing delivered through regional, state or national tourism bodies	Visitor services, local coordination and place management	Lower	Flinders Island, Christmas Island
Industry-led destination delivery	Destination marketing and promotion coordinated by industry associations or cooperative groups	Enabling role, limited funding support or regulatory functions	Low to variable	Outback Queensland tourism associations; regional WA destination groups

Interpretation of Models

The models outlined above reflect different ways tourism services are delivered in remote and island destinations, primarily distinguished by who delivers destination marketing, how visitor services are managed on-island, and where ongoing cost and accountability sit.

Models that separate visitor services from destination marketing typically see Council retain responsibility for on-island visitor services, visitor information facilities, coordination with local operators and airlines, and reporting, while destination marketing is delivered through state, regional or contracted arrangements. These models reduce direct delivery effort for Council while maintaining oversight of brand use and service interfaces.

Independent or industry-led models transfer destination marketing and promotion to separate destination bodies or industry associations. These arrangements rely on industry scale, collective governance and stable funding to coordinate activity, with Council involvement generally limited to enabling functions, oversight or regulatory roles rather than day-to-day tourism delivery.

As part of any future review of tourism structures, it is important to consider the role of a Council-led tourism function in maintaining independence from concentrated industry interests, supporting broad-based economic benefit, and ensuring the long-term sustainability of the tourism industry, including independent operators.
A Council-led model also enables balanced, destination-led support for industry, community and visitors, ensuring the tourism function serves the whole visitor economy rather than a narrow set of interests.

Each model represents a different allocation of delivery responsibility, cost exposure and governance effort, rather than a preferred or recommended approach.

Relevance to Norfolk Island

Norfolk Island's current model reflects the absence of a state tourism framework and the Island's historical reliance on Council to deliver a broad range of tourism functions. The conclusion of Commonwealth funding has altered the financial context but has not determined the most appropriate delivery model.

The models presented provide a structured basis for considering:

- the appropriate balance between direct service delivery and coordination
- the level of marketing activity Council is willing and able to fund
- the role of industry and external partners in destination promotion; and
- the long-term sustainability of tourism delivery within Council's broader service portfolio.

Any future adjustment to the current model would require consideration through Council's governance and decision-making processes, having regard to service scope, cost profile, industry capacity and alignment with the Tourism Industry Strategy.

18. Recommendations

The following recommendations build on the findings and opportunities identified in this review. They are grouped by implementation timeframe to support integration with Council's annual planning cycle. All recommendations are indicative and may be progressed subject to funding, internal prioritisation and Council approval.

Short Term (0-12 months)

The short-term recommendations focus on establishing clarity around Council's role in tourism delivery following the conclusion of Commonwealth funding. They are intended to support informed decision-making by confirming the service delivery model, funding position and associated expectations, without committing Council to delivery change.

Recommendation	Indicative Cost	Indicative Benefit
Confirm the Tourism service delivery model and scope of activities delivered by Council	Internal resources	Establishes clarity on Council's role and service boundaries
Confirm the ongoing funding position for the Tourism service	Internal resources	Improves financial certainty and short-term planning

Medium Term (12-36 months)

These recommendations focus on embedding service oversight and performance visibility to support sustainable Tourism service delivery over time.

Recommendation	Indicative Cost	Indicative Benefit
Establish or confirm a Tourism governance and performance framework aligned with Council reporting	Internal resources	Improves oversight and accountability

Longer-Term (Beyond 36 months)

These recommendations are exploratory in nature and are intended to inform future strategic consideration of Council's role in tourism delivery.

Recommendation	**Indicative Cost**	**Indicative Benefit**
Consider industry-led destination marketing arrangements with public oversight	To be determined	May reduce long-term delivery burden while maintaining neutrality and brand integrity
Use Tourism service review insights to inform development of the next Tourism Industry Strategy	Internal resources	Improves alignment between strategy and service delivery experience

19. Integrated Planning & Reporting (IP&R) Alignment

The recommendations in this Service Review have been developed to align with Council's integrated planning, budgeting and reporting processes. The review does not commit Council to specific actions, funding or delivery models but provides an evidence base to support future planning, prioritisation and decision making.

Community Strategic Plan (CSP 2016–2026)

The review aligns with **Strategic Direction 04 – A successful and innovative community**, which focuses on strengthening the Island's economy and supporting a vibrant business environment. It supports **Objective 6 – Strong, diverse and vibrant business environment**, which includes growing and diversifying the economy and supporting sectors such as tourism that contribute to local economic activity.

The recommendations focus on clarifying Council's role in tourism service delivery, managing financial exposure and supporting a sustainable tourism system that contributes to the Island's economic resilience while reflecting community values.

Delivery Program (2022–2026)

If endorsed, relevant actions arising from this review may be considered for inclusion through **future revisions of the Delivery Program**. Recommendations relating to service scope, governance arrangements and operating model clarity align with Council's role in supporting economic development and coordinating tourism-related activity.

Operational Plan (Annual)

Short-term recommendations, if adopted, may be reflected in future **Operational Plans** through defined actions, performance measures and resourcing decisions, subject to Council priorities and annual budget approval.

Resourcing Strategies

The review may inform Council's resourcing strategies, including:

- **Long-Term Financial Plan**, by identifying the cost profile and funding exposure associated with tourism service delivery
- **Workforce Management Strategy**, by clarifying Council's ongoing role in visitor services, industry coordination and oversight
- **Asset Management Strategy and associated Asset Management Plans**, noting that tourism delivery relies primarily on operational, digital and visitor service assets rather than major infrastructure.

Reporting

Progress against any adopted actions can be reported through Council's existing reporting mechanisms, including Quarterly Business Reporting and the Annual Report.

20. Implementation and Monitoring

This Service Review is advisory in nature. Implementation of any recommendations is subject to Council decision-making, funding availability and alignment with broader strategic priorities.

Implementation Approach
If Council elects to progress any recommendations, implementation will typically occur through:

- incorporation into the Delivery Program or Operational Plan
- budget consideration through the annual budget and Long-Term Financial Plan; and
- assignment of responsibility to the relevant business unit within existing governance arrangements.

No new governance structures or delivery vehicles are proposed through this review.

Monitoring and Oversight
Monitoring of any implemented actions would occur through Council's established internal processes, which may include:

- financial monitoring against approved budgets
- service and performance reporting through existing management reporting frameworks; and
- periodic review of service scope, delivery model and funding position as part of Council's broader service review cycle.

Where relevant, selected indicators already used within Tourism operations, such as visitor services activity, digital engagement metrics and budget performance may continue to be used to inform internal oversight and decision-making.

Review Cycle
The Tourism service may be revisited as part of Council's ongoing Service Review Program, particularly if there are material changes to funding arrangements, service scope or the broader tourism operating environment.

21. Appendix

Acronyms

Acronym	Meaning
NIRC	Norfolk Island Regional Council
VIC	Visitor Information Centre
SDA	Service Delivery Agreement
SEO	Search Engine Optimisation
DITRDCA	Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts
FTE	Full-Time Equivalent
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IP&R	Integrated Planning and Reporting
DILO	Day in the Life
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
RDO	Regional Development Organisation

Reference Documents

The following documents and information sources informed the preparation of this Service Review. This list highlights key material and is not exhaustive.

- Norfolk Island Regional Council, Community Strategic Plan 2016-2026
- Norfolk Island Regional Council, Delivery Program 2022-2026
- Norfolk Island Regional Council, Operational Plans (current and prior years)
- Norfolk Island Regional Council, Long-Term Financial Plan (current at time of review)
- Norfolk Island Regional Council, Workforce and Asset Management planning documents
- Norfolk Island Regional Council, Corporate risk and compliance information
- Norfolk Island Regional Council, Norfolk Island Tourism Industry Strategy 2024-2027
- Supporting background material referenced within the Tourism Industry Strategy
- Service Delivery Agreement – Service 14 Tourism Promotion between the Commonwealth and Norfolk Island Regional Council
- Relevant Commonwealth guidance and reporting requirements associated with the SDA
- Council financial information relating to Tourism service activity, including budget and actuals
- Operational information relating to visitor services, retail activity and marketing delivery
- Publicly available information from comparable regional and island destinations, including council and destination organisation websites, annual reports and tourism