



## news release

### **TWEED DAYTRIPPER NUMBERS ON THE RISE**

IN a year that saw the peak tourism season decimated by floods, the estimated number of daytrippers to the Tweed region was almost 900,000 for 2007/08, rising from less than 800,000 from the previous year.

According to the recently released National and International Visitor Surveys, the number of day visitors for the year ending June 2008 rose to 888,000 representing an increase of 24.5% over the previous year's statistics, while domestic and international overnight visitations remained relatively unchanged, despite the effects of the January weather.

"Tourism Research Australia's visitor surveys indicate that Tweed's daytrippers spend an average of \$79 per person on items such as meals, petrol, groceries and tours," said Tweed Tourism General Manager, Phil Villiers.

"As such, our thriving day tripper market injected an estimated \$70 million into our local economy during 2007-08.

"With international visitors spending around \$1,017 per person during their stay and domestic overnight visitors spending \$389 per person per visit, our tourism industry (including daytrippers) brought almost \$240 million into the region."

On January 11 this year, the State Government declared the Tweed a natural disaster area after a series of severe storms and weeks of torrential rains. Towns were cut off and hundreds of people were evacuated during what would normally be the peak holiday season.

A survey of Northern Rivers tourism operators at the time revealed estimated losses of more than \$18 million, with Murwillumbah and the surrounding areas being among the hardest hit.

"With 2008 starting on such a dismal note, we are particularly thrilled to see such a significant rise in the number of daytrippers," said Mr Villiers.

"Tweed Tourism has been working extremely hard to market the region in the wake of those devastating floods.

"We've also benefitted from flood relief funding contributed by the State and Federal Governments, which was invested by Northern Rivers Tourism in a \$600,000 advertising campaign for the entire North Coast region."

Of course, the local tourism industry now faces an even bigger challenge from the fall-out of the current global financial crisis.

"People are going to be hurting and luxuries like holidays are likely to be among the first casualties," said Mr Villiers.

"But if there is a silver lining to be found, we're hoping that the Tweed will benefit as people choose to take short break getaways closer to home and Tweed Tourism will be focussing its efforts on the Gold Coast and Brisbane drive markets in order to strengthen this sector.

"We're also hoping that the exchange rate may bring more international visitors our way and we have a number of initiatives in the pipeline to promote our region through the Gold Coast Airport gateway."

In other positive news for the Tweed tourism sector, a Visitor Profile and Destination Survey conducted by Tourism Research Australia in the Kingscliff/Cabarita area between April and June this year recorded an overall visitor satisfaction rate of 92%. This compared with the benchmark of 82% and was one of the highest ratings recorded in a series of surveys targeting regional destinations Australia-wide.

"One of the other interesting statistics that came out of the Kingscliff/Cabarita study is that 42% of the visitors surveyed stayed in our luxury hotels and resorts, while 37% stayed in caravan parks or camping grounds," said Mr Villiers.

"This clearly demonstrates that the Tweed appeals almost equally to the upmarket and budget ends of the holiday spectrum, due to the variety of options available within easy driving distance of major population centres in south-east Queensland.

"Being able to offer a diversity of holiday experiences will hopefully help our local tourism sector ride the highs and lows of the economic roller-coaster in the coming months.

"Overall, the surveys have confirmed the Tweed's growing reputation as a great holiday destination, particularly for the key drive markets from south-east Queensland and northern NSW.

"Going forward, our challenge is to target the interstate markets and the ease of access to the Tweed via the Gold Coast Airport."

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