



## MAYORAL MEMO - 20 APRIL 2022

The Dubbo Region was incredibly busy over the Easter weekend and it continues over the entire school holiday period. Many groups visited our area to take advantage of our perfect weather at this time of the year and our open arms to welcome visitors at any time of the year.

As regional areas try and recover from the last few years of a pandemic; drought; mouse plague; bushfires and floods, we have a real challenge on our hands in one particular aspect.

For anyone that missed out on their overseas holidays or visiting loved ones in other countries, I apologise for my next statement but the closure of our international borders was a great thing for our regional economy. I know it sounds crazy but let me throw a few facts on the Bunsen burner and see if they can stand the heat.

Going back to the last full year when our borders were open, Australia received 9.4 million visitors to our nation. They contributed \$60.8 billion to our economy. At face value, that sounds fantastic with the injection of those funds worth 3.1 per cent of our total GDP. Open the borders I hear you say!

When those people visit our nation, they typically go to Sydney to see the Opera House and the Harbour Bridge and possibly even feel the sand between their toes at Bondi Beach. They also want to be exposed to what nature has given us in this country with areas such as The Great Barrier Reef; Uluru; Kakadu and The Blue Mountains very popular.

Despite having an international attraction with The Taronga Western Plains Zoo, only 1.5 per cent of the total tourism to the Dubbo Region is from overseas. Or to put it another way, we only catch about 0.1 per cent of international visitors to Australia.

On the flip side, Australians undertook 11.3 million outbound trips in the year before COVID-19. We spent \$66.2 billion dollars on overseas travel. With our borders open, our nation is in tourism deficit to the tune of \$5.4 billion.

The second problem is that, on average, 25 per cent of all Australians will go overseas at least once in a year. I don't have data specific to the Dubbo region, but the logic would be that the rate here would probably be about the same. That means we have a significant amount of money that leaves our region with our residents going overseas but we receive minimal money in return from international visitors.

The last couple of years have increased our domestic tourism and money that would normally have gone overseas has been spent in regional areas. The challenge we have going forward, now that borders are open again, is how do we continue to capture those tourism dollars?

Tell me your best ideas at [mayor@dubbo.nsw.gov.au](mailto:mayor@dubbo.nsw.gov.au)

**Councillor Mathew Dickerson**  
**Mayor of Dubbo Regional Council**

Last Edited: 24 May 2022