



## **MEDIA RELEASE: Blue Mountains, Penrith and Western Sydney stronger together**

Western Sydney needs a more collaborative industry-driven approach to tourism, councils and industry must support it with collective funding and the boundaries between local government areas must soften, if the region is to take full advantage of the millions of visitors expected to arrive through the new Western Sydney International (WSI) airport.

They were the key messages at the inaugural Talking Tourism in Western Sydney combined networking event at Penrith Panthers on Wednesday [August 23].

Hosted by Blue Mountains Tourism (BMT) in partnership with Penrith Valley Chamber of Commerce, it attracted about 75 people including those from Scenic World, Blue Mountains Explorer Bus, Hotel Etico, Fairmont Hotel and Equeva Group, and Pullman Sydney Penrith, Holiday Inn Sydney St Marys, Mercure Penrith, Western Parkland City Authority and inbound tour operators.

Representatives from Blue Mountains and Penrith councils and Destination NSW also attended.

Tourism-interested businesses, agents, stakeholders and investors in the Blue Mountains, Penrith, Hawkesbury, Wollondilly and Western Sydney International region were invited.

Western Sydney International airport chief corporate affairs officer Scott MacKillop encouraged the regional tourism industry to prepare for at least 4 million visitors through Australia's only 24/7 airport by the end of 2027 through Qantas domestic flights alone.

The region was undergoing enormous growth, and the new Pullman Sydney Penrith might be the first 5-star hotel in the town, but it was but one of 10 hotels in planning or development application stage in Western Sydney, he said.

WSI would bring Melbourne and Brisbane within three-hours travel of Penrith and surrounding areas like the Blue Mountains, Wollondilly and the Hawkesbury.

Mr MacKillop encouraged businesses to support the BMT/Penrith Chamber push for a dedicated Western Sydney tourism organisation.

“It's essential that there is a co-ordinated effort at all levels of government and industry to take advantage and leverage the value that the airport is going to bring.”

Blue Mountains Tourism president Jason Cronshaw said the event was “a fantastic conversation opener between our regions”.

He urged tourism businesses and councils to work together across area boundaries towards a shared vision.

He cited the example of travelling from Brisbane airport 46km to the Gold Coast theme parks: “You don't really think about how far the distance is.

“Now if you put a pin in our new airport on a map and draw a 46km radius around it, you basically touch the edges of the Hawkesbury in the north, the Blue Mountains in the west and Wollondilly in the south.”

It was time for the traditional competition between areas to cease.

The new airport would change visitor habits, and the areas must work together to keep them in the region.

“Visitors are not going to care where the council boundaries are and what postcode they're in, or whether they're staying in the Blue Mountains or Wollondilly or Penrith or Campbelltown because, as with the Gold Coast example, they can jump in a car and go and visit wherever they want to go within our region.

“If we get it right, they'll stay longer. We've got three years to get it right.”

BMT had led the lobby to the NSW and Australian governments for funding.

“We need to get together more often like this around our region and understand what's on offer.”

Penrith Chamber president Richard Fox acknowledged some of the businesses and entities that had funded the collaborative efforts so far: Penrith Panthers, Penrith Valley Chamber, BMT, Scenic World, Sydney Motorsports Park, Western Sydney Lakes, Accor Group.

“It's a long, slow burn and the collaboration is just beginning,” he said. “Stay tuned for our next step, which will be contributing to a major regional networking event in December with South West Sydney Tourism Taskforce and other tourism associations.”

Kristy Joseph from The Orchard (opened just seven days previously) and Sahara Abreu from Pullman Sydney Penrith and Western Sydney Conference Centre (open for 11 days) also spoke at the event, along with Laura Purser, who owns The Bunker restaurants across the Blue Mountains and Penrith areas.

Macquarie Federal MP Susan Templeman, whose electorate spans the Hawkesbury and Blue Mountains, said while government provided infrastructure and frameworks for industry, businesses must collaborate for themselves.

“You need to seize opportunities. You need to think big and dream.”

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