

## Our History, our Future in Tourism \*

Wendy Fahey

Vast changes have taken place in tourism during the ten years in which I have been Manager of Tourism Services in Glen Innes. Across the industry we have seen a growing sophistication, and an increasingly demanding level of expectation, of visitors who expect value-for-money for their tourism dollar. The challenge has been taken up by a new age of tourism managers with university degrees and a global perspective of the industry and its changes. Following the business model, Visitor Information Centres have developed strategies and performance-measuring indicators, while in the background major investors look for competitive returns on their investments in the field.

In this environment, we find that experiences that offer something unique, beautiful, rare, authentic or of great cultural significance provide a strong appeal to visitors. Our history can offer that product. The main street Heritage buildings, for example, preserve a vision of the past in a rare extensive fashion. History, if identified and developed, can be marketed and packaged as experiences for visitors. The key word is *experiences* which may be linked to sensors, such as hearing, seeing, smelling, touching, or to activities such as learning or purchasing.

Successful Heritage tourism calls for an understanding of the different perspectives of tourism operators, of Heritage managers and broadly of the supporting communities. This understanding comes from close contact — it means networking, establishing common ground, building relationships, forming partnerships. It means, too, adopting a detailed and transparent business approach — directed towards the provision of quality visitor experiences that are not only viable but also sustainable for the Heritage attraction.

The challenge of this task cannot be taken lightly, and it is one that is often not recognised by the stakeholders. It calls for enormous commitment by many individuals, drawing upon technical skills, vision, professionalism, shared ideas on feasibility, and of course passion and money. If much of this challenge is taken up the opportunities, especially for a regional area, are enormous.

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\* Summary of a paper delivered by Wendy Fahey, Tourism Services Manager, Glen Innes, at the New England/ Northwest Regional Historical and Affiliated Societies Conference at the Land of the Beardies History House, Glen Innes, 28 February 2004.



*Grey Street, Glen Innes, c.1960*

Tourism once was separated simply into ‘domestic’ and ‘international’, niche and mass. We spoke of ‘singles’, ‘double income no kids’, and ‘grey nomads’. Such broad generalisations no longer apply: the market has changed and cannot be adequately categorised by age or income/ lifestyles. As tourists we increasingly become distinctive individuals seeking a valid personal experience: discovery, relaxation, education, and even indulgence. To support this individuality, we value our dollars and how we spend them. Thus we need motivation and reassurance from a number of mediums in order to select an experience that we deem to be of value.

As a consequence, marketing has become more complex and highly competitive. As tourism-managers we have a continual need to separate the development of the product itself from its marketing to potential consumers. More specifically, as a foundation we need to understand what is the nature of any particular Heritage product, and then lead on from this into business, operation and marketing plans in a tourism industry that is itself constantly evolving.

In Glen Innes and Severn Shire, we work hard to ensure that our Heritage product generates an economic benefit that is not only sensitive to the Heritage significance of the product, but contributes to the sustainability of our community and lifestyle. Such Heritage-tourism not only preserves our history and distinctive character for future

generations, but also makes it accessible to all those people who are hungry to learn about our Australian history.

Our significant Heritage tourism products include:

*The Land of the Beardies History House* which is not only about displays and an historic building, but also is a centre for a vast archival service and people dedicated to the preservation of our history;

*The Emmaville Mining Museum* which is projecting a colourful past but also injecting new life and optimism for the future into a village community.

Our main street Heritage buildings, pioneering town and rural development.

*The Australian Standing Stones*, a national monument to Australia's Celtic pioneers. The Celtic theme provides us with a point of difference – a unique branding.

*World Heritage national parks* which are not only about the environment, but such aspects as the history of timber-getting and development of the parks.

Our tourism industry in Glen Innes and Severn Shire is based on these Heritage products. By linking or developing them into experiences and working in partnership, they are being enjoyed by visitors and local people – as well as bringing significant economic and social benefits to our community.

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*Editor:*

Further details on Heritage-tourism in Glen Innes can be located at:  
<http://www.gleninnestourism.com/>