

CENTRAL WEST SPORTS TOURISM STRATEGY

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This report, Central West Sports Tourism Strategy, was prepared by TRC Tourism for Destination Central West NSW (DNCW).

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Acknowledgement

We acknowledge the Indigenous peoples of the lands, waters and communities we work together with. We pay our respects to their cultures; and to their Elders – past, present and emerging.

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ACRONYMS

TERM	DEFINITION
DNCW	Destination Central West, NSW
DNSW	Destination New South Wales
LGA	Local Government Area
CNSWJO	Central NSW Joint Organisation
NSO	National Sporting Organisation
UN	United Nations

1 Introduction

The Central West Sports Tourism Strategy (the Strategy) will guide the growth of sports tourism across the NSW Central West region. It provides recommendations to harnesses the strengths, uniqueness and synergies of the twelve LGAs across the region.

To develop the Strategy, a review of the current situation and opportunities across the region was undertaken to assess the strengths and challenges of the region's current sports tourism offering and recommend strategic actions to assist in growing the sports-tourism market. Destination Central West (DNCW) appointed industry specialists TRC Tourism, to undertake this work.

1.1 Purpose of this Strategy

This Strategy is a shared regional tool.

The Strategy has four practical purposes:

- **A decision framework** - guiding where local councils direct their coordination, advocacy and brokerage effort, focused on actions they can realistically deliver operationally.
- **An advocacy and funding tool for councils** - each LGA can lift its regional role, product strengths and named opportunities directly into grant applications and business cases, demonstrating regional (not just local) benefit. Appendix A and the action plan proformas at Appendix B are structured for this purpose.
- **A coordination tool between LGAs** - clarifying complementary roles so councils collaborate on events and infrastructure rather than bidding against each other.
- **A conversation starter with clubs and codes** - giving sporting clubs, associations and event owners a clear picture of what the region offers and who to talk to.

The Strategy is intended as a living document. It should be reviewed annually by local councils, with roles, priorities and the maturity framework adjusted as facilities come online, events grow and data improves.

1.2 Sports Tourism Definition

Sports Tourism refers to travel motivated wholly or partly by participation in, spectating at, or supporting organised sport, active recreation, or competitive events.

For this report, Sports Tourism is defined as:

“The attraction and hosting of sporting events, competitions, training camps and active recreation experiences that leverage the region’s sporting facilities, landscapes and communities to drive visitation, dispersal, extended stays and year-round economic benefit.”

This includes:

- **Event-led tourism** (e.g. regional and state championships, equestrian competitions)
- **Participation and training-based travel** (clubs, schools and elite or semi-elite teams)
- **Active lifestyle tourism** (outdoor recreation linked to place-based experiences)
- **Spectator-driven visitation** (e.g. Family, supporters and officials)

Sports tourism event hierarchy

To support consistent planning, prioritisation and investment decisions, this Strategy adopts a four-tier sports tourism event hierarchy. This hierarchy is distinct from the Sports Tourism Maturity Framework (Refer Section 4.3) and focuses specifically on event scale, impact and role.

Tier 1: Signature / Hallmark Events

Events of regional or national significance, strongly associated with place, delivering high visitation, profile and economic impact.

Tier 2: Major Events

State or national level events generating strong overnight visitation, often recurring and multi-day.

Tier 3: Regional Circuit Events

Regular competitions and tournaments drawing teams from across NSW, forming the backbone of the sports tourism calendar.

Tier 4: Community and Development Events

Local competitions, clinics and participation events that build pathways, community value and future tourism potential.

This hierarchy allows LGAs to focus on the right kinds of events for their current maturity, capacity and strategic role within the region.

¹ <https://www.dncw.com.au/>

1.3 Destination Central West NSW

Destination Central West, NSW (DNCW) aims to inspire and facilitate collaboration to grow a sustainable visitor economy for Central West NSW region and contribute to the NSW regional overnight visitor expenditure target.¹

As part of this role, DNCW advocates, and is a catalyst for, supporting new and improved tourism initiatives and infrastructure development projects that support visitor economy growth within the region.

The Destination Network is comprised of twelve local government areas (LGAs): Bathurst Regional Council, Blayney Shire Council, Cabonne Shire Council, Cowra Shire Council, Forbes Shire Council, Lachlan Shire Council, Lithgow City Council, Mid-Western Regional Council, Oberon Shire Council, Orange City Council, Parkes Shire Council and Weddin Shire Council. These LGAs are grouped into the following sub regions, as identified within the DMP:

- Parkes, Forbes, Lachlan, Weddin, Cowra
- Mid-Western (Mudgee)
- Bathurst, Oberon, Lithgow
- Orange, Blayney, Cabonne

1.4 Engagement

Each of the LGA stakeholders was critical to the development of the Strategy. All LGAs provided input via survey and submissions and targeted interviews with relevant staff in management, recreation, tourism and economic development roles. Consultation questions included a review of current and potential sports tourism infrastructure and events. Focus areas included LGA aspirations for regional and shire-based sports tourism, strengths to leverage, key limitations to growth and the role of sports tourism in the region.

2 Situational Analysis

2.1 The Region

The Wiradjuri, Gundungurra and Darug Nations are the Traditional Owners of the DNCW region stretching from the elevated Central Tablelands to the expansive Central West plains. Unique in its diversity of economy, the region is known for its high-quality food and wine, stunning landscapes, and heritage tourism.

Infrastructure Australia's March 2022 report on the region's strengths and infrastructure gaps identifies key existing assets being air connectivity (several regional airports), natural environments (rivers, national parks, and conservation areas) and cultural heritage sites.

2.2 Engagement Findings

Background research and consultation point to a region that knows its potential, has some standout successes, and has wide-ranging maturity in sports tourism.

The following sections provide a summary of findings across the region. Details of the findings for individual LGAs are provided in Appendix A.

LGA expectations of the strategy

There was strong alignment across LGAs as to the role of the Strategy. To assist their objectives the LGAs need a regional sports tourism strategy that:

- **Clarity of focus:** Concrete guidance on who does what, where to focus, and how to avoid unnecessary competition.
- **A realistic, tiered approach:** Support and expectations tailored to current maturity and product strengths, not aspirational sameness.
- **Stronger advocacy tools:** A regional strategy that directly underpins infrastructure and event funding bids, clearly showing regional, not just local, benefit.

- **Practical levers, not just a high-level plan and slogans:** Specific actions to convert sports visitors into broader tourism, and to connect events to local operators in usable ways.
- **Evidence and feedback loops:** A way to measure progress, show impact, and adjust roles and investments over time.

Product strengths across LGAs

Clear product strengths were identified across each LGA. Some of these were distinct to an individual LGA e.g. Mid-Western Regional Council's premium training hub. Others showed synergies across multiple LGAs e.g. gravel cycling across Cabonne, Parkes and Weddin Shire Councils.

LGA	Product Strengths
Bathurst Regional Council	Motor Sports, Major event hosting capability; heritage-linked visitation
Blayney Shire Council	Equestrian (all-weather undercover arena); showground events
Cabonne Shire Council	Gravel cycling, Disc golf, Community-led participation events
Cowra Shire Council	Strong community sport hosting track record across rugby league, rugby union and netball, tennis, motorcycle racing, target shooting, informal recreation and cycling; add-on tourism experiences for events hosted in neighbouring LGAs
Forbes Shire Council	Rugby League, Equestrian, Golf (in cluster with Parkes); informal recreation such as fishing and aquatic sports; new rectangular sports precinct (2026)
Lachlan Shire Council	Community focus - player visits, skills clinics and coaching days with major codes. Condo Rally, Picnic Race circuit
Lithgow City Council	Outdoor & Nature Based (MTB, trail running, canyoning, climbing, aquatic events)
Mid-Western Regional Council	Premium training hub & high-performance camps, Elite field-based codes: NRL, Rugby, Touch, Indoor sports centre
Oberon Shire Council	Small-medium tournaments and participation events; golf, rodeo, campdrafting circuit, equestrian and pony club disciplines; multi-sport facilities and outdoor adventure
Orange City Council	Road cycling, High-participation, tournament style events (e.g. athletics, hockey, junior championships); new Orange Regional Sports Precinct
Parkes Shire Council	Ability to manage large scale events, gravel cycling (1,000 km mapped routes); Golf, Hockey
Weddin Shire Council	Gravel cycling, Go karting

Sports tourism maturity across LGAs

LGAs across the region are at very different points in relation to both their current situation and desired position in relation to sports tourism. There was a strong desire for this to be recognised in the Strategy and for them to be supported where they are at in their desired journey. Maturity banding reflects current facilities, events, partnerships and capability - it is not a judgement of long-term potential (refer Section 4.3)

Sports Tourism Maturity Level	Snapshot Description	LGAs
High	Established event hosts with strong facilities, recurring major/elite events and mature commercial relationships; clear sports-tourism brand and capable teams.	Bathurst Regional Council Mid-Western Regional Council Orange City Council
Medium	Have some key assets, events or codes and growing experience, but with gaps in infrastructure, consistency and positioning relative to high-maturity neighbours.	Blayney Shire Council Forbes Shire Council Lithgow City Council Parkes Shire Council
Emerging	Early-stage sports tourism with basic facilities; any visiting event or named player is a big win; relationships with codes are nascent; strong focus on community value.	Cabonne Shire Council Cowra Shire Council Lachlan Shire Council Oberon Shire Council Weddin Shire Council

2.3 SWOT Analysis

The SWOT highlights that the Central West already has the building blocks of a leading regional sports tourism destination - flagship facilities, strong code relationships, diverse landscapes and a powerful wine/food/nature brand.

Strengths

Diverse and distinctive regional offers – mix of wine regions, larger regional cities, and more remote/cultural destinations, plus a range of sports (NRL/rugby, touch, hockey, swimming, gravel cycling, trail running, etc.).

Flagship facilities and proven event capability – high-quality venues (e.g. Glen Willow, training hubs) and evidence the region can host elite-level events and camps.

Deep community sporting heritage - long histories of producing state and international athletes and hosting representative fixtures across the region, providing credibility with codes and a strong volunteer culture.

Existing commercial relationships with major codes – long-term, trust-based relationships with clubs and codes that anchor headline fixtures and training camps.

Strong visitor brand foundations – established strengths in wine, food, nature and rural experiences that can be leveraged to extend or repeat visits from sports attendees.

Flexible accommodation mix – combination of short-stay rentals, caravan parks, motels and boutique properties that can scale up to high occupancy for major event weekends.

Weaknesses

Uneven maturity and capacity across LGAs – large variation in facility quality, event-hosting experience, staffing and expertise, making a single regional approach hard to apply without tailoring.

Funding and infrastructure gaps – chronic underfunding of new/renewed facilities (e.g. indoor sports centres, aquatic expansions) and event-attraction budgets; several priority projects remain unfunded

No large-scale indoor venue - the region lacks an indoor venue capable of hosting national or major tournaments - showcourt capability, grandstand seating and six or more courts.

Amenity gaps around quality playing surfaces - in several LGAs, well-maintained playing fields are let down by the amenities around them (change rooms, seating, shade, canteens), limiting event-hosting competitiveness.

Perception and engagement issues – some operators view sports tourism as benefiting only pubs/cafes, with wineries, restaurants and other operators disengaged. Generic workshops often fail to shift behaviour.

Risk of strategic “sameness” – overlapping plans (local, regional, state) often repeat generic “stay longer, spend more” messages without clear differentiation or new levers.

Data and measurement limitations – inconsistent collection and use of sports tourism data, making it hard to evidence impact and prioritise or advocate for investments.

Opportunities

Sharper LGA differentiation and complementary roles – clearly defining “who does what best” to reduce competition and strengthen bids.

Sports as a gateway to broader tourism – systematically converting sports visitors into repeat leisure visitors or higher-value short stays, and using cross-LGA itineraries to drive regional dispersal.

New and emerging sports segments – growth in gravel cycling, trail running, bikepacking and other adventure/participation events that can activate under-used landscapes and facilities.

Emerging indoor formats, including e-sports - developing fit-for-purpose venues for growth formats such as e-sports alongside traditional indoor codes, broadening the year-round event calendar.

Multi-use and community-oriented facility design – framing new/renewed facilities as both event assets and community wellbeing infrastructure strengthens business cases and social licence.

Cross-LGA accommodation overflow models - formalising overflow arrangements (commercial stock, camping, short-stay rentals) between neighbouring LGAs so larger events are not capped by any single town's bed stock.

Targeted industry upskilling and collaboration – replacing generic workshops with tailored, small-group/1-to-1 programs that support real packaging, partnerships and action plans.

Volunteer pools and event-delivery capability - supporting the development of volunteer bases and event-delivery skills, and encouraging collaboration across clubs and neighbouring LGAs.

Alignment with state/national strategies and funding –alignment with Destination NSW 2035 and other policies to unlock grants and position Central West as a model regional sports tourism area.

Threats

Inter-regional and intra-regional competition – other regions and neighbouring LGAs chasing the same codes/events, risking rivalry and diluted returns, especially if roles are unclear.

Over-reliance on a small number of sports/partners – dependence on a few major codes, events or sponsors makes destinations vulnerable to shifts in league priorities, governance or broadcasting.

Inequitable local return from events - community pushback and event fatigue will grow if a fair share of event-generated revenue does not remain within host communities and clubs

Shifting accommodation supply - a significant influx of short-stay (Airbnb-style) listings, often from absentee owners, is changing how supply should be assessed - headline bed numbers may overstate reliable event capacity while displacing long-term rental stock

Economic and policy volatility – changes in government funding programs, policy focus or economic conditions that tighten grant availability and reduce discretionary travel.

Climate and environmental risks – drought, heat, smoke, flooding and other climate impacts can disrupt outdoor events, increase costs, and shorten viable seasons.

Community pushback or fatigue – if benefits are not widely felt, communities may resist new facilities or events, seeing them as catering mainly to visitors or specific businesses.

2.4 Sports Tourism Contribution to the Visitor Economy

"Sporting events are sparking the decision to travel, but fans are staying long after the final whistle blows, immersing themselves in experiences across the state. Sports tourism doesn't just fill stadiums; it fills hotels, restaurants, pubs and theatres, supporting thousands of businesses and jobs that rely on year-round tourism."²

A recent report from UN Tourism has highlighted sports tourism as the fastest-growing segment of the global tourism industry. In 2025, sports tourism accounted for 10% of global travel expenditure, with revenues growing at a compound annual rate of 28% since 2020, above the 22% growth seen across all tourism.³

While comprehensive sports-specific expenditure data is not consistently captured at a destination or LGA level in Australia, available tourism data and event evidence confirm that sports tourism already represents a material and growing component of the Central West visitor economy.⁴

At a state level, NSW recorded approximately \$60.4 billion in total visitor expenditure in the year ending December 2025, reinforcing its position as Australia's largest visitor economy. Regional NSW accounted for approximately \$26.3 billion of this spend over the same period, highlighting the critical role of regional destinations in delivering the State's visitor economy growth.⁵

Within the Central West, stakeholder evidence and indicative data suggest that sports-related travel contributes a meaningful share of overnight visitation, particularly during major events, tournaments and training camps. In Bathurst alone, council estimates indicate that sports tourism contributes approximately 8–9% of the local visitor economy, excluding Mount Panorama activity, with

major sporting events and tournaments attracting an estimated 250,000 visitors annually (Bathurst Regional Council consultation input).

Across other LGAs, the economic contribution is less consistently measured but is observable through:

- High accommodation occupancy aligned with tournaments and training camps
- Repeat visitation through club circuits, annual events and high-performance programs
- Concentrated spend across accommodation, food and beverage, fuel and retail.

Importantly, much of the Central West's sports tourism activity is participant-led, driven by teams, competitors, officials and support networks rather than spectators. Tourism Research Australia recognises that event-linked and participation-based travel is a key driver of regional overnight visitation and mid-week demand. The absence of a shared regional data framework limits the ability of LGAs to consistently quantify impact, demonstrate return on investment or compare events. Addressing this gap is a priority action of this Strategy.

² State Government of NSW. 09/03/2026 | Press release 09/03/2026 Minister for Jobs and Tourism Steve Kamper.

³ <https://www.untourism.int/sport-tourism>

⁴ <https://www.dncw.com.au/reports-and-visitor-statistics>

⁵ <https://www.destinationnsw.com.au/insights/nsw-statistics>

2.5 Sports Tourism Visitor Markets for the Central West

Sports tourism travel to the Central West is driven by a distinct set of visitor markets, each with different motivations, behaviours and economic impacts. Understanding these markets is essential to prioritising effort, targeting investment and maximising visitor yield.

Geographic markets

The primary geographic markets for sports tourism to the Central West are:

- **Greater Sydney and Western Sydney**, representing the strongest drive market for tournaments, camps and major events
- **Regional NSW**, particularly neighbouring regions accessing centralised facilities and events
- **Canberra and the ACT**, as a secondary drive market for selected codes and competitions
- **Interstate markets**, particularly for niche segments such as gravel cycling, elite training camps and national championships.

These patterns align with Tourism Research Australia findings that domestic overnight and event travel within NSW continues to dominate regional visitation flows.

Demographic markets

Demographic segments include:

- **Families and junior sport cohorts**, typically travelling for multi-day tournaments
- **Young adults** (18–35) participating in endurance, cycling and outdoor events,
- **Adult club participants** (30–55) in sports such as rugby, hockey, equestrian and golf
- **Team officials, coaches and support staff**, often travelling mid-week and staying longer.

Psychographic markets

From a motivation perspective, Central West sports tourism is dominated by:

- **Participant-led travellers** - clubs, teams and individuals travelling to compete or train
- **Lifestyle and identity-based travellers** - particularly in cycling, trail running and outdoor sports
- **Affiliation travellers** - family and supporters accompanying participants
- **Elite pathway and performance markets** - professional and semi-elite squads attending camps

These markets show high propensity for repeat visitation, particularly when events are well-run and when destinations provide clear reasons to return for leisure travel outside event periods.

2.6 Accommodation and Supporting Infrastructure

Accommodation is the single most cited constraint on event scale - but the picture is about mix and coordination, not just bed numbers.

Consultation and stakeholder feedback consistently identified accommodation as a critical constraint for most locations, with three dimensions that this Strategy responds to:

- **A changing supply profile.** The regional accommodation market has shifted significantly with a large influx of short-stay (Airbnb-style) listings, in some towns driven by absentee metropolitan owners. This changes how supply should be assessed: short-stay stock adds surge capacity for event weekends but is less reliable for block bookings, offers uneven quality assurance, and can reduce long-term rental availability for the workforce that events depend on. Accommodation audits underpinning event bids should distinguish commercial, short-stay and camping/overflow stock rather than reporting a single bed count.
- **Cross-LGA overflow models.** Larger events routinely exceed any single town's capacity. Neighbouring LGAs - for example Oberon in relation to Bathurst's major event weekends - can formally share overflow capacity across commercial stock, camping and short-stay rentals. This Strategy recommends that councils investigate standing overflow arrangements between anchor hosts and neighbouring shires so that overflow becomes a planned regional product (with transport and 'stay here, play there' packaging) rather than an ad hoc spillover.
- **Aligning development approvals with event demand.** The most persistent product gap is family-sized and larger group accommodation at a 3-star-plus standard - the stock junior tournaments and club travel depend on. Councils should align longer-term accommodation development approvals and investment attraction with sports tourism needs, using event demand evidence in planning and prospectus documents.

2.7 Competitor Sports Tourism Destinations

The Central West operates within a competitive regional sports tourism landscape, particularly in relation to event attraction, training camps and high-participation tournaments.

Major competitor destinations include:

- Dubbo and Orana Region: large regional facilities, concentration of state and national events
- Riverina (Wagga Wagga): strong defence and field sport infrastructure, elite pathway events
- Tamworth and New England: equine, music-linked events and large tournament venues
- Central Coast and Hunter Valley: proximity to Sydney with strong accommodation depth
- Canberra Region: access to national institutions, elite sport and government funding.

Compared to these regions, Central West's competitive advantages lie in:

- **Proximity to Sydney** with reduced congestion and lower operating costs
- **Its mix of landscapes** and the different roles each LGA plays in sports tourism, rather than relying on a single dominant centre to host all events and activities
- **Established relationships** with elite sporting codes and training providers
- **Capacity to host** both premium and community-scale events across multiple locations.

The primary competitive risk identified through consultation is intra-regional competition, where LGAs pursue similar events without clear differentiation, reducing bargaining power and diluting returns. This Strategy responds directly to this risk by clarifying roles, maturity pathways and complementary positioning.

2.8 The Growth Potential of Sports Tourism in the Central West

Sports tourism presents a clear opportunity to grow the Central West visitor economy in ways that are consistent, resilient and aligned with community outcomes. Unlike many leisure markets, sports tourism generates travel based on fixed calendars and commitments; is less sensitive to seasonal price fluctuations; delivers strong mid-week and shoulder-season demand; and creates repeat visitation through clubs, circuits and annual events.

The Central West is well positioned to grow sports tourism through four primary pathways:

- **Deepening existing strengths**

Building on flagship events, major facilities and established partnerships rather than chasing new, high-risk opportunities.

- **Progression through event tiers**

Supporting LGAs to move events from local to regional, and regional to state level over time.

- **Conversion of sports visitors into leisure travellers**

Leveraging wine, food, nature, public art and heritage experiences to encourage return visits for non-sport purposes.

- **Differentiation and collaboration**

Positioning LGAs with clear, complementary roles to avoid duplication and improve event attraction outcomes.

Realising this growth potential depends on coordinated effort, better data, targeted investment and sustained engagement with both sporting and tourism stakeholders.

3 Conclusions

3.1 Summary of Findings

Sports tourism is already contributing materially to the Central West visitor economy, but its full potential is constrained by uneven maturity, inconsistent data and fragmented positioning.

A few LGAs are operating as de facto regional anchors, hosting major events, elite training camps and large participation events in well-developed precincts, underpinned by strong commercial relationships with codes and clubs. Others are building from more modest but promising foundations - a successful regional carnival here, a key facility upgrade there - while a further group are at the very start of their journey, for whom any visiting team or named player is of major cultural significance. Overlaying this is the region's existing strength in wine, food, nature and rural experiences, which provides a powerful platform to turn sports visitors into higher-value, repeat leisure visitors if the right connections are made.

The findings that shape the recommendations are:

- The region is in a strong position to grow sports tourism, with strong anchor destinations, flagship assets and a diverse portfolio of sports suited to participation-led tourism.
- LGAs see sports tourism as a gateway to broader tourism but need practical support to make the conversion happen.
- Clear product differentiation across the region is needed; the primary competitive risk is intra-regional competition without coordination.
- Maturity varies widely across the region. The Strategy must support LGAs where they are at, with realistic, staged pathways rather than aspirational sameness.
- Several LGAs have deeper sporting foundations than headline events suggest - long histories of producing representative athletes and hosting significant fixtures - and this heritage is an asset for attracting codes and events.

- Volunteer reliance is high, particularly in emerging and medium-maturity LGAs; mechanisms to build volunteer pools and minimise burnout are required.
- Local operators and communities do not consistently perceive the community and economic benefits of sports tourism, limiting social licence - and that licence erodes further where event revenue does not visibly stay in host communities.
- Funding and infrastructure are constraints, with accommodation critical for most locations; the changing short-stay supply profile means bed counts alone no longer describe event capacity.
- Many councils lack reliable numbers on event-driven visitation, nights, spend and social outcomes; the evidence base needs to be built through shared audits and a common data framework.

The opportunity now is to move from a collection of largely independent efforts to a coherent regional sports tourism system: one that clarifies roles, plays to genuine strengths, supports LGAs according to their stage of maturity, and deliberately connects sporting events to broader visitor experiences, regional dispersal and community wellbeing.

4 Recommendations

4.1 Adopt the Sports Tourism Strategy Statement of Ambition

The following Statement of Ambition for sports tourism across Destination Central West has been developed to encapsulate the vision behind the Strategy.

To grow sports tourism as a core driver of the Central West visitor economy and community wellbeing, by playing to each LGA's strengths, coordinating effort across the region, and turning sports visitors into repeat, higher-value guests.

4.2 Adopt the Sports Tourism Strategic Principles

The following principles have been developed to guide the actions and to aid decision-making when unanticipated situations arise.

- **Sports as Core Tourism**
Treat sports visitors as core tourists and deliberately convert them into higher-value, repeat and regionally dispersed visitors.
- **Play to Distinct Strengths**
Each LGA has a clear, complementary sports tourism role instead of using a one-size-fits-all approach.
- **Support LGAs Where They Are At**
Match infrastructure, funding and capability support to each LGA's current level of sports tourism maturity.
- **Keep Benefits Local.**
Design events and hosting arrangements so a fair share of event-generated value stays with host communities, clubs and volunteers - sustaining social licence for growth.
- **Measure Economic and Social Impact**
Use a simple shared data framework to track both visitor spend and community benefits from sports tourism.

4.3 Adopt the Sports Tourism Maturity Framework

The purpose of a Sports Tourism Maturity Framework is to target support, investment and expectations so each LGA can succeed from its current starting point. LGAs across the Central West are starting from very different points in sports tourism. A single, one-size-fits-all approach would hold some back and over-stretch others.

The framework groups LGAs into three broad bands based on current facilities, events, partnerships and capability. It is not a judgement of long-term potential - LGAs can and will move between bands over time as new facilities come online, relationships deepen and experience grows.

Table 1. The Sports Tourism Maturity Framework

Maturity Band	Snapshot Description	Primary Strategic Focus
High-Maturity LGAs	Established event hosts with strong facilities, recurring major/elite events and mature commercial relationships; clear sports-tourism brand and capable teams.	Protect and grow flagship events and partnerships; target major infrastructure upgrades; deepen linkage between sport and broader tourism/visitor yield.
Mid-Maturity / Developing LGAs	Have some key assets, events or codes and growing experience, but with gaps in infrastructure, consistency and positioning relative to high-maturity neighbours.	Clarify regional role and niches; back catalytic facility/event investments; build capability in event bidding, packaging and data; encourage complementary programming.
Emerging LGAs	Early-stage sports tourism with basic facilities; any visiting event or named player is a big win; relationships with codes are nascent; strong focus on community value.	Build foundational capability and relationships; support small, low-risk events; identify realistic niches (e.g. community/adventure); ensure right-sized, multi-use, community-anchored infrastructure proposals.

What each maturity level means for LGAs

FOR HIGH MATURITY LGAS

Being placed in the high maturity band recognises that your council is already operating as a regional anchor for sports tourism. You have established facilities, repeat events and strong partnerships that bring significant visitation and profile to the Central West.

The regional strategy will focus on protecting and growing what you already do well – supporting major infrastructure upgrades, strengthening your ability to attract and retain flagship events, and more deliberately linking sport to broader visitor yield.

Your role is central to the region's overall success, and the intention is to back that role, not to dilute or redistribute it.

FOR MEDIUM MATURITY LGAS

Being placed in the mid maturity band acknowledges that your council already has real strengths to build on – whether that's a promising facility, a successful recurring event, or an emerging reputation in particular codes or formats. At the same time, there are some clear gaps (in infrastructure, consistency or positioning) that need to be addressed before you can play at the same level as the regional anchors.

The regional strategy will focus on helping you move up a rung: clarifying your niche within the regional offer, backing targeted “step change” investments, and building capability in areas like event bidding, packaging and data.

The aim is not to copy what others are doing, but to help you grow into the spaces where you can genuinely stand out.

FOR EMERGING LGAS

Being placed in the emerging band recognises that you are at the start of your sports tourism journey, often working with basic community facilities and infrequent but highly valued visiting events. This is not a negative label, and it does not diminish the depth of sporting heritage many emerging LGAs hold; it reflects the current scale of tourism-facing sports product.

The regional strategy will focus on foundational support: helping you build relationships with codes and event organisers, trial small and low risk event models, and identify realistic niches that fit your landscapes, communities and capacity.

As these foundations strengthen, there is a clear pathway for your council to move into higher maturity bands over time.

Implement the Sports Tourism Event Hierarchy

To support clear decision-making and avoid a one-size-fits-all approach to event attraction, it is recommended that the region's councils adopt the Sports Tourism Event Hierarchy as outlined in this Strategy.

The Event Hierarchy provides a practical lens for understanding the appropriate scale, role and risk profile of different types of sports tourism events, and complements the Sports Tourism Maturity Framework by guiding what kinds of events are realistic and desirable for LGAs at different stages of development.

Applied together, the Maturity Framework and Event Hierarchy enable clearer alignment between LGA capability and event ambition; more strategic targeting of event attraction and retention efforts; reduced duplication and competition between LGAs; and more effective advocacy for funding and infrastructure investment. The hierarchy should be used as a guiding tool, not a prescriptive ranking, and reviewed over time as LGAs grow in capability and experience.

4.4 Implement the Core Actions

The core actions below are framed around what councils can deliver operationally - coordination, brokerage, advocacy, data and industry development - with delivery partners identified where actions sit with clubs or state agencies. Event attraction, investment decisions and regional advocacy should all be assessed against both the Maturity Framework and the Event Hierarchy to ensure alignment and realistic outcomes.

Define clear regional roles for each LGA

Define a clear regional role for each LGA based on existing product strengths and current maturity level and develop an LGA-specific action plan to deliver it. Proforma maturity-level action plans are provided at Appendix B and are designed so each council can adapt them directly into delivery plans and grant applications. Lead: Regional councils

Complete a regional facility, event and opportunity audit

Stakeholder feedback identified clubs, facilities and events that were not visible in the original consultation, and uneven depth of information between LGAs. To close this gap and create a durable evidence base, councils across the region should coordinate three linked audits, using a consistent template across all twelve LGAs:

- **Facility audit:** existing and planned sporting facilities, including condition, capacity, amenities and event-readiness (capturing distributed village assets, e.g. Oberon's facilities across O'Connell, Black Springs and Burruga, as well as town-based precincts).
- **Current event audit:** carnivals, competitions and events currently running in the region, by tier, season and organiser.
- **Target event audit:** carnivals and events the region could realistically attract, with a named list of codes, associations and event owners to approach, matched to LGA roles and the Event Hierarchy.

Councils hold much of this information and regional coordination is essential so results are comparable and can populate the regional prospectus and data framework. Lead: Regional councils and their partners

Progress named cross-LGA catalytic opportunities

To give councils concrete, grant-ready projects - not just high-level direction - the following cross-LGA opportunities identified through consultation and feedback should be scoped as first-mover collaborations. Each pairs specific shires with specific infrastructure and event outcomes:

- **Central West performance horse and equestrian circuit (Forbes–Blayney, with Cabonne and Parkes).** Link Forbes' Multipurpose Equestrian Centre precinct and Blayney's all-weather undercover arena into a scheduled circuit aligned with the NSW equestrian calendar, identifying the infrastructure each venue needs (e.g. cross-country/eventing course at Forbes, portable yarding and seating) to co-host circuit rounds. This gives both shires a defined, fundable infrastructure case tied to a named event outcome.
- **Indoor tennis training and tournament link (Parkes–Forbes).** Build on the existing intertown tennis relationship to scope a shared indoor tennis training capability serving both shires, positioned for junior development camps and wet-weather-proof regional tournaments, with Tennis NSW engagement (leveraging Cowra Tennis Club's existing relationship with Tennis NSW at circuit level).
- **Anchor-and-overflow accommodation model (Bathurst–Oberon pilot).** Formalise a standing overflow arrangement for Bathurst's major event weekends using Oberon's commercial stock, camping and short-stay rentals, packaged with off-field experiences - then template the model for other anchor/neighbour pairs (e.g. Orange- Blayney-Cabonne, Parkes-Forbes).
- **Cowra rugby league signature event pathway.** Working with Cowra clubs and NSWRL, select and back one existing property as Cowra's signature rugby league event - candidates include the Female Tackle Carnival, Western Rams (Johns/Daley Cup) fixtures, Group 10 Finals and Woodbridge Cup Finals - supporting a shift to two-day formats, visitor-facing packaging and positioning for NSWRL development programs and school/representative trials (building on Cowra's hosting of the PSSA District Trial).

- **Lachlan Valley gravel cycling network (Parkes–Forbes–Weddin–Lachlan–Cowra–Cabonne).** Bundle the sub-region's mapped gravel assets into a single destination proposition and event calendar, anchored by Parkes' established event and 1,000 km of mapped routes.

Each opportunity should be scoped through a short feasibility brief (need, partners, capital requirement, event outcome, economic case) suitable for direct attachment to state and federal grant applications. Lead: Regional councils and their partners.

Develop a “sport as a gateway to tourism” conversion program

Run a targeted regional program to reframe sports tourism as part of tourism, aimed at wineries, restaurants, accommodation, tour operators and other visitor businesses - showing operators that sports visitors are simply visitors, and building packaging, cross-promotion and event-ready business practices. Develop a clear path for sporting organisations to explore regional tourism opportunities. Lead: Regional councils and their partners.

Implement a regional sports tourism data and insight framework

Establish a simple shared framework, coordinated between LGAs, to capture event-driven visitation, nights, spend and social outcomes using consistent methods - populated initially by the proposed audits at and by pilot impact studies on selected events (e.g. the Orange Running Festival). The framework should produce an annual regional impact snapshot to support funding bids and community communication. Lead: Regional councils and their partners.

Establish maturity band-specific industry development programs

- **High-maturity:** advanced topics (portfolio management, risk, diversification, yield maximisation).

- **Mid-maturity:** event bidding, packaging with operators, partnership building, data capture.
- **Emerging:** foundational hosting readiness, simple event models, basic tourism collaboration and volunteer pool development and event-delivery capability - including cross-club and cross-LGA volunteer sharing.

Strengthen governance, resourcing and local benefit-sharing

Consultation and feedback identified three recurring structural issues that sit with councils but warrant a consistent regional position:

- Position sports event management alongside economic development. Councils should consider structuring resourcing so sporting event attraction and management sit with (or work in lock-step with) economic and business development teams, rather than being handled separately - ensuring event decisions are made with visitor economy outcomes in view.
- Budget for attraction, not just operation. Council budgets should account for the cost of actively attracting events (bidding, hosting fees, relationship management), not only the operational cost of running them, to maximise future use of facilities.
- Keep a fair share of value local. Event agreements should build in mechanisms for host clubs and communities to share in event-generated revenue (e.g. canteen and gate arrangements, volunteer reimbursement, facility reinvestment), directly addressing community pushback and event fatigue.

Embed multi-use and community outcomes in all major projects.

All major facility proposals should be designed and framed as both event assets and community wellbeing infrastructure - strengthening business cases, grant competitiveness and social licence. Where quality playing surfaces exist, prioritise the surrounding amenities (change rooms, seating, shade, canteens) that determine event-hosting competitiveness.

Create a tiered infrastructure and investment pipeline

Maintain a regional pipeline of sports infrastructure projects, tiered by maturity band and event ambition, so that state and federal funding opportunities can be matched quickly to ready projects. Near-term regional-scale gaps identified through consultation include a large-scale indoor venue capable of hosting national and major tournaments (showcourt capability, grandstand seating, six-plus courts) and family-oriented 3-star-plus accommodation stock; the pipeline should also carry the named catalytic opportunities.



APPENDICES



Appendix A – Situation Analysis Findings by LGA

The profiles below summarise consultation findings for each LGA using a consistent structure: a situation summary, product strengths and opportunities, the LGA's own priority focus, and its role in the regional picture. Profiles reflect the depth of information supplied to date; the proposed regional audit at will progressively bring all profiles to a consistent standard.

Bathurst Regional Council

Summary	Bathurst's sports tourism is significant, contributing an estimated 8–9% of the visitor economy in 2023–24, excluding Mount Panorama. Major events like the Bathurst 1000 and large soccer tournaments attract around 250,000 people annually. However, Bathurst lacks a strategic approach to attracting new events and retaining visitors, and Council faces budget constraints that limit support for new events. Accommodation capacity, proximity to Sydney and diverse sports offerings make it a prime destination; a regional approach leveraging neighbouring towns such as Orange and Oberon is seen as a promising strategy.
Strengths & Opportunities	Motorsport and heritage identity; proven major-event capability; strong accommodation base able to be extended via formal overflow arrangements with Oberon and other neighbours; opportunity to turn existing events into longer stays and wider regional dispersal.
LGA Focus	Doing more with the visitors they already get: turning existing events (Bathurst 1000, NRL fixture, major tournaments) into longer stays and wider regional dispersal, not just 'come, play, go home'. Promoting the destination and region, not just the venue, using a hub-and-spoke approach so Bathurst events send people across the Central West.
Regional Focus	A genuinely regional, collaborative approach to events, recognising complementary strengths (Bathurst - heritage and motorsport; Orange - wine and cycling; Oberon - nature) and working together rather than competing. Practical tools such as a regional prospectus and cross-linked websites so that events Bathurst cannot host flow to a neighbour. Being strategic under tight budgets: with discretionary event-attraction funds lost, Bathurst needs the Strategy to help target the right events, fill off-peak accommodation gaps, and demonstrate clear economic and social return. With around 6% of overnight visits being sport-related, Bathurst also needs help telling that story so residents understand why Council invests in fields, facilities and events - and using sports tourism to reinforce a stronger Central West identity.

Blayney Shire Council

Summary	Key assets include the Equestrian Centre and the showground, which hosts events such as the Blayney Show and the Tom Curtain Show. Challenges include balancing community and commercial usage, managing fees, and leveraging local resources. The showground's undercover arena and electrical network are significant advantages. Collaboration with neighbouring shires could improve event scheduling.
Strengths & Opportunities	All-weather, council-managed equestrian centre and showground; opportunity to anchor a leg of a Central West equestrian circuit with Forbes (refer Section 4.5.3); practical, low-cost improvements (information, imagery, prospectuses) to attract the right events.
LGA Focus	Better leverage the council-managed, all-weather showground and equestrian centre as a distinctive regional asset while maintaining access for local clubs. Practical, low-cost actions such as improved information, imagery and prospectuses to attract the right kinds of events, and clearer community versus commercial pricing.
Regional Focus	Stronger but light-touch collaboration with neighbouring councils so that bookings and benefits are shared across the region and flow into local businesses, not just the venue.

Cabonne Shire Council

Summary	Cabonne is integrating community and economic development through sports tourism, with Orange 360 as the destination marketing organisation. Local successes include disc golf championships attracting around 200 participants. Challenges include limited accommodation, volunteer fatigue, limited staff and funding, complex cross-LGA processes and early-stage internal understanding of sports tourism.
Strengths & Opportunities	Disc golf; gravel cycling and trails; community-led events; day-trip positioning and the family market; opportunity to participate in the Lachlan Valley gravel network and Orange overflow arrangements.
LGA Focus	Build on disc golf, gravel cycling and community-led events; pursue small, realistic, high-impact wins first; use existing regional alliances and an internal awareness and education focus.
Regional Focus	Cabonne needs a regional strategy that meets them where they are (early-stage, resource-constrained, with clear niche strengths); provides concrete, scalable actions rather than broad aspirations; and helps them support community champions, navigate cross-council complexity, and clarify their role in the regional sports tourism ecosystem.

Cowra Shire Council

Summary	Cowra's tourism-facing sports product is emerging, but its sporting foundations are deep - a long history of producing representative athletes and hosting significant fixtures (Shute Shield matches, grand finals, representative games) alongside regular community sport. Annual rugby league, rugby union and netball carnivals, the Tour de Cowra and intertown tennis provide the current base, and accommodation is sufficient if demand is spread. A recurring theme is the mismatch between high-quality playing fields and the lacking amenities around them (change rooms, seating, shade, canteens), which limits event competitiveness.
Strengths & Opportunities	Established clubs across multiple codes: Cowra Motorcycle Racing Club (Woodstock Park Speedway - regarded as one of the safest circuits in the country); Cowra Tennis Club (intertown and regional tournaments; strong Tennis NSW relationship); Merriganowry Pistol Club (national silhouette titles, September 2027); rugby league (Group 10 juniors, Woodbridge Cup seniors) and netball carnivals; trail potential at Wyangala Dam; compact layout, multiple fields and no council fees for junior sport. Rugby league signature-event candidates: Female Tackle Carnival, Western Rams (Johns/Daley Cup) fixtures, Group 10 and Woodbridge Cup Finals.
LGA Focus	Rebrand existing carnivals and the Tour de Cowra as regional events with visitor-facing information and 'while you're here' itineraries; shift toward two-day carnival formats and 'weekend away' packaging; activate outdoor recreation around Wyangala Dam; create a small signature event (e.g. canola-season fun run) alongside a named rugby league signature event; host rather than run larger events at Wyangala/Woodstock; prioritise amenity upgrades around quality fields; grow club and volunteer capacity, recognising heavy volunteer reliance may cap growth.
Regional Focus	Embed Cowra in 2–3 night regional sport and outdoor itineraries (POW history, Japanese Garden, trails, Weddin hiking); position for NSWRL development programs and school/representative trials (Cowra hosted this year's PSSA District Trial). The Strategy validates Cowra's 'start small, seed and grow' reality and keeps actions low-bureaucracy and partnership-driven, acknowledging Cowra Tourism is a small not-for-profit outside Council.

Forbes Shire Council

Summary	Forbes is an emerging sports tourism location with broad multisport potential, anchored by equestrian, a new rectangular sports precinct and grandstand (launching 2026) and strong water-based assets. Its main constraints are limited large-scale accommodation and gaps in supporting infrastructure (fields, portable seating), which currently limit its ability to host major events. It is well positioned for development-style activities (camps, talent pathways) and for a collaborative role in the wider region.
Strengths & Opportunities	Equestrian hub potential: linking the Multipurpose Equestrian Centre, Showground and Jockey Club into a single precinct, including a potential cross-country/eventing course and equestrian event circuits with other shires - the Forbes–Blayney performance horse circuit at Section 4.5.3 provides a named, grant-ready expression of this. Rectangular precinct: attract pre-season NRL/Super Rugby/A-League trials, state-wide knockouts and other rectangular-field events. Development base: position Forbes as a talent incubator (elite athlete camps, development squads, Country NRL/Koori Cup/junior rounds). Multi-use innovation: sand-based events at the equestrian centre (beach-style volleyball, inland nippers, obstacle runs). Golf as part of a Parkes–Forbes cluster; indoor tennis training link with Parkes building on the existing intertown relationship (Section 4.5.3); gravel cycling; picnic races and harness racing; novelty events (NSW Dachshund Racing ‘Dash for Cash’).
LGA Focus	Use existing equestrian, field, court and water-based facilities; establish early positioning around the new rectangular precinct; address portable seating shortfalls; improve engagement with sports peak bodies and leverage past representatives and development officers; secure staged investment for facilities in early stages of development. The named cross-shire opportunities at Section 4.5.3 are intended to give Forbes concrete projects to attach to the next stage of sports infrastructure grant funding.
Regional Focus	A willing collaborator on events (e.g. engaging with Blayney's facility and events); works in a supportive cluster with Parkes, Lachlan, Weddin and Cowra on joint destination promotion; functions as a nearby stay option when Grenfell's or Parkes' accommodation is limited; potential node in regional equestrian circuits and gravel cycling itineraries, reinforcing regional positioning rather than operating as a standalone flagship destination.

Lachlan Shire Council

Summary	Focused on regional events and infrastructure. Key limitations include budget constraints and accommodation (with worker and contractor demand occupying stock), especially for large events such as the Condo 750 rally (around 30 bikes and 25 cars), which faces insurance and cost challenges. Growth areas include picnic races and professional sport engagement, with rugby league particularly popular.
Strengths & Opportunities	Condo 750 and the picnic race circuit as anchor events; strong sporting culture and talent pipeline ('heartland of bush footy'); lakes and outdoor recreation (including potential revival of the Lake Cargelligo powerboat festival concept); structured camping/glamping and pop-up accommodation models at showgrounds and lakes.
LGA Focus	Grow and enhance anchor events (viability support on cost, insurance and compliance; better spectator and companion experiences; data-guided sustainable growth). Maximise economic and community benefit (new local spend, longer stays, wrap-around offers for non-participants, packaging tools). Overcome structural constraints (accommodation models, enabling infrastructure - amenities, power, gathering spaces, access - supported by funding bids). Position the region for professional sport engagement: training days, trial matches, public sessions, academy-style visits framed as codes 'giving back' to long-distance supporter communities. Activate lakes and outdoor recreation, with water security considered in event planning.
Regional Focus	Coordinate regionally and align locally: align the sports tourism strategy with each LGA's Community Strategic Plan, destination management plan and delivery plans; elevate a small number of priority events and projects per LGA to regional status; encourage cross-shire events and trails; use the Strategy as shared evidence in grant and advocacy efforts. Build volunteer and organisational capacity: plan for volunteer fatigue and turnover, seek funding for event coordination support and training, streamline insurance, approvals and safety processes.

Lithgow City Council

Summary	Lithgow's potential lies in outdoor and adventure sport rather than stadium events. Constraints include limited facilities and accommodation, high venue fees (e.g. \$4,000 for the Rydal Showground) and stretched council resources. Strengths include distinctive landscapes, rail accessibility from Sydney and an emerging event base.
Strengths & Opportunities	Mountain biking, trail running, canyoning, climbing, multi-day walks, lake-based activities and fly fishing; the Rigid Edge Running Festival and aquatic events at the Olympic/indoor pool; a Seven Valleys 'passport'/challenge product of signature rides, runs, paddles and climbs to drive repeat visitation; long-term multi-use precinct capacity at Delta Park (Green Spot) using developer contributions.
LGA Focus	Position the Seven Valleys as an outdoor and nature-based sports hub; grow and cluster events around existing strengths and rebuild relationships with MTB and cycling event promoters; plan long-term precinct capacity at Delta Park; reset venue pricing and management, reframing showgrounds and key venues (including State Mine Heritage Park) from short-term revenue centres to strategic tourism assets with event-friendly fees, clear policies and support for pop-up event villages.
Regional Focus	A strategy that is realistic about limited council resources and legacy facility constraints, and builds on Lithgow's clear comparative advantage in outdoor and nature-based sport - positioning the Seven Valleys as the region's adventure and endurance hub, closely aligned with the existing Seven Valleys brand and focused on repeat visitation. It should address enabling settings (event-friendly venue pricing, constructive relationships with land managers, timing around industrial accommodation peaks, support for stretched volunteer bases) and give Lithgow a fair, differentiated role complementing larger stadium centres.

Mid-Western Regional Council

Summary	Mid-Western (Mudgee) operates as the region's premium sports training and events hub - 'small but mighty'. The Glen Willow Sports Complex and the Mudgee Training Village have hosted numerous professional teams at high occupancy, supporting local businesses and mid-week tourism. Challenges include funding limitations and changing perceptions of sports tourism's broader economic impact.
Strengths & Opportunities	Premium event delivery and elite training facilities (NRL/rugby, touch); leverage Rugby World Cup/s upcoming events to attract team camps; word-of-mouth and team fan-base marketing; a short-term priority indoor sports centre (basketball, netball, AusTag and other indoor sports), potentially integrated with an aquatic/multi-use arena; boutique, story-rich accommodation and experiences aligned with Mudgee's character; extended-stay and repeat-visit conversion supported by regional tools (itineraries, packaging, post-event remarketing) rather than one-off local initiatives.
LGA Focus	Consolidate the premium training and events hub position; host headline and elite-level events and camps; use the Strategy to strengthen funding bids for the indoor centre and precinct enhancements, positioned as regional rather than just local projects; treat sports tourism as core tourism - converting sports visitors into repeat leisure visitors, maximising spend during short stays, and encouraging regional dispersal; prioritise bespoke, small-group or one-to-one operator support over generic workshops; track both economic outcomes (event impact, spend, occupancy) and social outcomes (community use, pride, multi-use value).
Regional Focus	Clear differentiation between LGAs - mapping 'who has what' in infrastructure, event strengths and development plans so councils 'sit in their lane' rather than chasing the same codes; respect for the commercial reality of event attraction (relationship-based, long-term, budget-dependent) and for hard-won existing partnerships; regional coordination of ambition rather than promises to redirect events; nuanced levers beyond 'stay longer, spend more' (maximising spend in existing stays, repeat visitation, dispersal); clear metrics with line of sight to DNSW 2035; and multi-use, community-anchored facility design considered in every major project.

Oberon Shire Council

Summary	Oberon is a small-shire, multi-sport and outdoor-adventure destination with more depth than a single-town lens suggests. Facilities are distributed across Oberon, O'Connell, Black Springs and Burruga - including football fields, netball courts, indoor and outdoor tennis, a new sporting complex and cricket-ready grounds with new sheds and canteen. Feedback emphasised this multi-venue capacity means multi-field events need not default to Bathurst. Budget constraints and the need for better cross-shire collaboration are the key challenges.
Strengths & Opportunities	18-hole golf course overlooking the lake with a history of hosting larger tournaments; a strong rodeo and campdrafting circuit drawing 5,000+ attendees annually (including the Bull Futurity); pony club and riding disciplines; community football, netball, hockey and cricket; gravel and trail riding and a short rail trail; capacity to host small-medium tournaments and participation events across multiple villages; formal overflow accommodation role for Bathurst's major event weekends (Section 4.5.3); 'come for the sport, stay for the experience' overlays (farm stays, truffle and food experiences, fossicking, seasonal snow play as a complementary destination experience rather than a sports product).
LGA Focus	Position Oberon as a small-shire, multi-sport and outdoor-adventure hub; back grassroots champions now (gravel riding, rodeo circuit, community tournaments) while treating major concepts such as an ice rink as long-term, funding-dependent opportunities; clearly differentiate Oberon within the region - not a big-stadium host, but a stand-alone host for small-medium events and a complementary base and overflow partner for regional events.
Regional Focus	Maintain a regional sports event prospectus that includes Oberon and all council areas; hold relationships with brokers and state/national codes, pitching 'Central West packages' instead of single towns; offer standard in-kind support menus (ground hire, security, marketing support) that small shires can opt into. Develop joint event models with nearby shires - e.g. Bathurst hosts marquee fixtures while Oberon provides warm-up and lower-grade fixtures, overflow accommodation and off-field experiences.

Orange City Council

Summary	Orange's sports tourism is anchored by the new Orange Regional Sports Precinct, which will host high-profile events including state and national championships across multiple fields, a stadium and a state-level synthetic athletics facility. Challenges include volunteer burnout, accommodation product-mix gaps during major events, finite council budgets against rising host costs, and regional competition without coordination. The Council's relationship with Sports Marketing Australia is crucial for securing events.
Strengths & Opportunities	Road cycling; multi-code precinct capability (touch, league, union, soccer, athletics, cricket), extendable via Sir Jack Brabham Park; strong fit for junior state and national championships with high family travel and proven success (indoor hockey, junior rugby, junior cricket); seasonal gap-filling (January–February, August) with a cooler-summer advantage; central NSW accessibility; established events (Orange Running Festival) and the SMA partnership; accommodation overflow with Bathurst and nearby towns; a large-scale indoor venue (showcourt capability, grandstand seating, 6+ courts) identified as the region's key indoor gap; fit-for-purpose e-sport venues as an emerging growth format; and better alignment of longer-term accommodation approvals with sports tourism needs (family-sized, 3-star-plus stock).
LGA Focus	Leverage the new precinct and central location to specialise in high-participation, tournament-style events that fill seasonal gaps and drive strong visitor spend - while making the model sustainable for council budgets, volunteers and clubs, and converting 'heads in beds' into broader in-town benefit. Address volunteer burnout and uneven local payoff models (some clubs gain strongly and reinvest; others shoulder workload with little revenue share). Restructure resourcing so sporting event management sits alongside economic and business development teams, and budget for the cost of attracting events, not just running them. Close data and evaluation gaps by piloting robust impact studies on selected events.
Regional Focus	A regional strategy that supports specialisation in high-participation tournaments; reduces unproductive regional competition and bidding wars with Bathurst, Dubbo and Mudgee; provides shared data and evaluation frameworks; supports volunteers, fair local revenue models and capacity building for associations delivering multi-day tournaments; and offers practical tools to make businesses 'event-ready' and maximise visitor spend and length of stay.

Parkes Shire Council

Summary	Parkes combines a flagship growth product (gravel cycling), hero facilities and codes (hockey and golf) and a proven large-event delivery machine. The shire has successfully hosted a gravel cycling event attracting 200 riders (300–500 expected this year) with around 1,000 km of mapped routes across 14 trails, and boasts approximately four artificial hockey turfs - unusual for a town of its size, with a history of producing Olympians - and an award-winning golf course. Challenges include limited council resources and coordination between departments.
Strengths & Opportunities	Position Parkes (and the sub-region) as a leading Australian gravel destination, using the event as a showcase for year-round riding and bikepacking; targeted event and packaging plans for hockey and golf (tournaments, carnivals, stay-and-play offers); leverage proven mega-event capability (25,000+ visitors for the Elvis Festival; ~1,500 commercial beds plus temporary camping; well-honed systems for road closures, vendor management, registrations and visitor servicing) to position Parkes as ‘event-ready’ for major sports gatherings; indoor tennis training link with Forbes (Section 4.5.3); potential involvement in horse racing events.
LGA Focus	Develop the gravel flagship, hockey and golf as hero sports anchoring the Parkes sports identity, and package large-event capability in approaches to brokers, NSOs and event owners.
Regional Focus	Cycling framed as a Lachlan Valley, multi-LGA opportunity (Parkes, Forbes, Weddin/Grenfell, Lachlan/Condobolin, Cowra, Cabonne); bundle regional assets into a shared sports tourism offer (refer Section 4.5.3).

Weddin Shire Council

Summary	Weddin's constraints centre on limited accommodation for multi-day events (day events such as swimming carnivals still generate significant local revenue), high-cost and low-access venues (notably the showground), a shrinking volunteer base, constrained budgets, weak data and a real risk of being overshadowed by larger regional centres. Successful events include the NSW karting championships and the Cargo-to-Grenfell walk.
Strengths & Opportunities	Upgraded sports and karting infrastructure (championship-standard track with multi-event potential); unique natural assets and gravel networks; central location relative to Wagga, Canberra and Orange; existing fundraising and community events that could be repositioned as experience-led sports tourism products; improving relationships with surrounding LGAs, with recognised mutual dependence for product and accommodation (e.g. visitors staying in Cowra, Forbes or Hilltops while spending in Grenfell).
LGA Focus	Unlock infrastructure (especially Crown land/showground access and amenities); connect with professional event operators; build community and political understanding of sports tourism as an economic driver; address venue hire cost barriers.
Regional Focus	A practical, tiered, advocacy-focused strategy that helps Weddin collaborate across LGAs (including the Lachlan Valley gravel network), and ensures its niche strengths are visible and supported, not overshadowed by larger neighbours.

Appendix B – LGA Specific Action Plan Proformas

The following are practical, prioritised action plan proformas for each maturity band. They are designed to be customised by each LGA and lifted directly into delivery plans, funding bids and business cases..

B1. Sports Tourism Action Plan for High-Maturity LGAs

Top 5 Priorities (0–5 years)

Protect and grow flagship events and relationships

Lock in multi-year agreements with key codes and clubs; identify 2–3 ‘must keep’ events per year and build contingency plans (funding, political support, community backing); create a simple relationship map (who holds which relationships, renewal dates, risk points).

Deliver at least one ‘step-change’ infrastructure project

Choose one priority anchor project (e.g. indoor sports centre, major precinct upgrade) and drive it from concept to funding to construction; ensure design is multi-use (sport + events + community + tourism); align the business case with the regional strategy and DNSW 2035.

Embed sport-to-tourism conversion into every major event

For each flagship event: capture basic visitor data (origin, nights, contact details where possible); offer at least one partner package (e.g. venue + winery + restaurant, or event + return-visit offer); build a post-event remarketing flow (e.g. EDMs promoting off-season leisure trips).

Lead cross-LGA itineraries and dispersal offers

Co-develop 2–3 regional itineraries with neighbouring LGAs (e.g. ‘play in Mudgee, ride in Lithgow; weekend in Bathurst, midweek in Orange’); use your marketing capacity to host and promote these itineraries, giving smaller LGAs a platform - including formal overflow partnerships with neighbouring shires (e.g. Bathurst–Oberon).

Demonstrate value with robust data and stories

For a small set of key events and facilities, track economic and social outcomes (visitor spend proxy, occupancy shifts, community use hours); turn this into one annual impact snapshot to support further funding and community support.

B2. Sports Tourism Action Plan for Medium Maturity LGAs

Top 5 Priorities (0–5 years)

Choose a clear primary role and 1–2 focus sports/formats

Decide whether you are best placed for regional tournaments, participation festivals, junior pathways, or a niche (e.g. trail running, cycling, equestrian, a single code); document this clearly and align council decisions to it, so you are not chasing everything.

Lift one facility or event to the next rung

Pick one venue or one recurring event with the strongest potential; plan a targeted upgrade or enhancement (lighting, amenities, additional courts or fields, event support); aim for it to step from local to regional, or regional to state level. Where a named cross-LGA opportunity exists (e.g. the Forbes–Blayney equestrian circuit or Parkes–Forbes indoor tennis link), use it as the anchor project.

Build basic commercial capability and relationships

Identify priority codes and associations that fit your role; schedule a yearly relationship calendar (who you'll talk to, about what, when); train 1–2 staff in event bidding, costings and risk assessment; budget for attraction costs, not just operations.

Integrate local operators into 2–3 key events

For your upgraded event or facility, bring in at least three local businesses (accommodation, food, experiences) as partners and co-create simple packages or offers for participants and supporters.

Start collecting simple data and case studies

For your focal event or facility, track the number of teams and participants, origin and estimated nights; document 1–2 case studies showing impact on local businesses and community.

Indicative Staging

- **Short term (0–2 years):** confirm the LGA's primary sports tourism role; identify and commit to one priority facility or event for step-up investment; establish basic relationship and bidding capacity (nominated lead staff, simple pitch materials).
- **Medium term (3–5 years):** deliver the agreed facility or event upgrade and secure at least one higher-tier event (e.g. a state-level carnival); integrate local tourism businesses into event delivery and packaging with at least two tested visitor offers per year; use data and stories from those successes to strengthen future funding bids and reposition the LGA within the maturity framework.

B3. Sports Tourism Action Plan for Emerging Maturity LGAs

Top 5 Priorities (0–5 years)

Pick 1–2 realistic entry-level niches

Examples: small community festivals or carnivals on existing ovals; named-player or coaching clinic visits; adventure and participation events that fit your landscapes (trail runs, gravel rides); repositioning an existing club event (rodeo round, tennis tournament, speedway meeting, carnival) as a visitor-facing product. Focus on what is deliverable with current facilities.

Build foundational relationships with codes and event organisers

Identify 3–5 key contacts (regional development officers, association leads, event organisers - leveraging existing club relationships with state bodies such as Tennis NSW, NSWRL, NSWAPA/SSAA); commit to regular, low-pressure conversations (2–3 times a year); aim first for small, low-risk activations, not big wins.

Get ‘event ready’ with simple improvements

Focus on low-cost, high-impact upgrades to existing community facilities - amenities (toilets, change rooms, shade, canteens), basic signage and access - prioritising the amenity gaps around quality playing surfaces; develop 1–2 simple event templates (traffic, parking, volunteer roles).

Maximise community value and tell that story

For each activation, capture photos, testimonials and quotes from locals; note local business involvement (cafes, pubs, accommodation); ensure a fair share of event value stays with host clubs and volunteers; use these stories to build internal support for future investment.

Explore 1 right-sized, multi-use facility concept (3–10 years)

Once a couple of small events have succeeded, scope one realistic facility improvement or new asset that is multi-use (community first, events second) and scaled to your population and demand; position it in the emerging tier of the regional infrastructure pipeline.



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