TRAVELLERS' PULSE

DCO NSW VISITOR RESEARCH INSIGHTS

Destination Country and Outback NSW

DMS DESTINATION MARKETING STORE

TOP 20 RESEARCH INSIGHTS

1. Over the past 5 years[1] the DNCO network area has averaged 5.7 million visitors per year.
    a. Overnight visitors comprised 48% of visitors, and contributed approx. $1.3 billion per year.
    b. Day visitors comprised 52% and contributed approx. $387 million per year.
    c. International visitors comprise less than 1%, and contributed approx. $47 million per year.
2. Average visitor expenditure is estimated at $1.7 billion per year.
3. New England North West averaged the highest volume of visitors 3.2 million = 57% of the total network area.
4. Greater Western Plains averaged 1.7 million visitors = 30% of the total network area.
5. Outback NSW averaged 0.7 million visitors = 13% of the total network area.
6. An average of **9.3 million** nights were spent in the region, with 50% spent in private and 50% in commercial accommodation.
7. Domestic overnight average of $141 per night - lower than other areas in Regional NSW ($172)
8. Average night stay was 2.9 nights - lower than Regional NSW average of 3.2 nights
9. Average night stay in NENW was 2.8 nights; GWP 2.3 nights and Outback 3.8 nights.
10. A high volume of intra-region visitors resides within the network area (75% day visitors, 22% overnight), and travel *within and between* data hubs.
11. Inter-state visitors tend to visit towns on the edges of the network area more than the interior e.g. Outback receives 14% of overnight visitors from VIC, where NENW receives 5%.
12. By volume, Sydney is the largest segment for the whole network (12% of all visitors), however Regional NSW and Qld are other key segments. The strength of these segments varies in each hub.
13. The network area shows dominance of three segments **Baby Boomer couples, Gen X families and Gen X couples.** Each data hub attracts these three segments.
14. Highest visitation for the whole destination network area was **6.8 million visitors** in 2019
15. The impacts of Covid_19 has seen total visitation decrease by 40% since 2019 in DNCO.
16. Current annual visitation is approx. **4.1 million** as at June 2022.
17. Reasons for overnight travel are mixed and include **VFR (31%), holiday (34%)** and business (28%).
18. **75%** of overnight visitors undertake **social activities** including dining, VFR, and sightseeing.
19. 6% of overnight visitors to the network area attended an event/festival, down from 10% in 2019.
20. **18%** of overnight visitors undertake **nature-based** activities, however only 11% of day visitors undertake them.

[1] TRA (2018-2022) NVS data

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Research methods

The purpose of this report is to provide data and analysis relevant to destination management planning for the Country Outback NSW destination network using data primarily supplied by Tourism Research Australia from their NVS and IVS surveys as well as other relevant data sources.

The new Country Outback network area covers an extensive area of NSW, from Tenterfield in the north to Dubbo in the south, and Broken Hill in the west, incorporating 26 local government areas (LGA). Boundaries to this network area were changed as of July 2022, causing differences in visitation patterns as described in this report.

Source: https://www.dnconsw.com.au/

The large size of the destination network has made it necessary to break down the area into three Data Hubs to examine relevant and practical information. These data hubs have been previously defined within the 2018-2022 Destination Marketing Plan to identify differences and commonalities between different parts of the network. Data for each hub was downloaded using ArcGis[2] to examine LGA, Tourism and SA2 boundaries as defined within the DNSW Destination Network Boundaries[3] (see also Appendix 1 for detailed methodology). Data for this report is thus presented for each hub as well as for the Destination Network area as a whole.

Outback NSW	New England & North West	Greater Western Plains
Broken Hill City Council, Bourke Shire Council, Bogan Shire Council, (Nyngan) Brewarrina Shire Council, Central Darling Shire Council, Cobar Shire Council, Walgett Shire Council Unincorporated Far West Region of NSW	Armidale Regional Council, Tamworth Regional Council, Inverell Shire Council, Glen Innes Severn Council, Gwydir Shire Council, Moree Plains Council, Liverpool Plains Shire Council, Narrabri Shire Council, Gunnedah Shire Council, Tenterfield Shire Council, Uralla Shire Council, Walcha Council	Coonamble Shire Council, Dubbo Regional Council, (Wellington) Gilgandra Shire Council, Narromine Shire Council, Warren Shire Council, (Warren) Warrumbungle Shire Council (Coonabarabran)

[2] https://www.destinationnsw.com.au/our-industry/destination-networks
[3] https://www.arcgis.com/home/webmap/

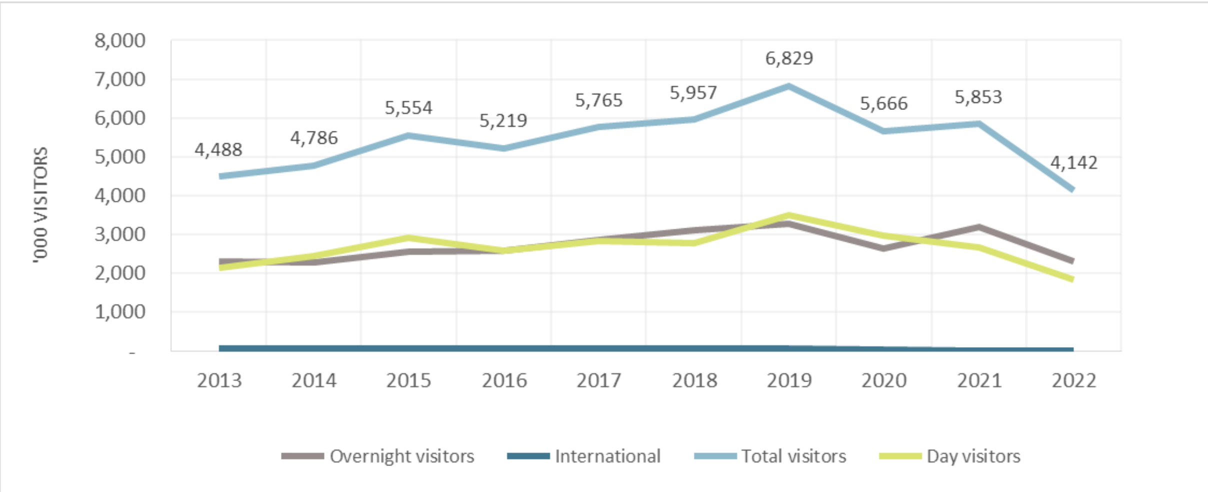
Visitation overview

Review of data from TRA and DNSW as well as key strategy documents has shown the following visitation patterns averaged over the past five years (year-end June 2018 to 2022)[4] for the **whole Country Outback Destination Network (DNCO)**. Each data hub is considered in the pages following.

- Total visitation averaged 5.7 million per year.
- Overnight visitors comprise 48% of visitors, and contribute approx. $1.3 billion per year.
- Day visitors comprise 52% and contribute approx. $387 million per year.
- International visitors comprise less than 1%, and contribute approx. $64 million per year.
- Visitor expenditure has averaged $1.75 billion per year.
- Domestic overnight average of $141 per night.
- Domestic average night stay is 2.9 nights.

Over a 10-year timeframe, visitation to the DNCO had been steadily increasing to reach **6.8 million visitors** in 2019. However, as shown, there has been an ongoing impact from COVID_19 and related travel restrictions since then with visitation decreasing by 17% in 2020 and by 29% in the financial year 2021-2022[5].

The total decrease for the DNCO area from the year-end 2018/9 to 2021/22 has been approx. 40%. This result is reflective of the situation across NSW, with the number of domestic overnight trips in NSW decreasing 33% from June 2019 to June 2022[6].



Source: TRA: NVS database (2011-2022)

Over the past five years (2018 to 2022) an average of **9.3 million nights** were spent per year in the network area, with 50% spent in private and 50% in commercial accommodation.

The average night stay of 2.9 nights is less than the Regional NSW average (3.2 nights) for that period.

[4] TRA visitor survey. Financial Year data. 2018 to 2022
[5] TRA visitor survey. Financial Year data. 2011 to 2022
[6] TRA (2022) www.tra.gov.au/tra/2016/research/domestic-travel-by-australians.html

Visitor summary

As shown below, the market segments for each data hub are different in size and composition with each contributing to the total DNCO region. Using a five-year average (2018-2022) it was found:

- New England/North West has the highest volume of visitors at 3.2 million = 57% of the total network area.
- Great Western Plains attracted 1.7 million visitors = 30% of the total network area.
- Outback NSW attracted 0.8 million visitors = 13% of the total network area.

These variances are reflected in the economic contribution of each data hub, with NENW providing 42% of the $1.7 billion total network contribution.

5-year average (2018-2022)		# Visitors '000	% of network visitation	$ contribution	$ per night^
Network area	Domestic overnight	2,906	48%	$1,289 m	$155
	Domestic day	2,748	52%	$387 m	$141
	International	36	<1%	$47 m	$51
	Total	5,690	100%	$1,723 m	
Outback	Domestic overnight	530	9%	$274 m	$135
	Domestic day *	226	4%	$28 m	$123
	International	7	<1%	$7 m	$47
	Total	763	13%	$308 m	
New England & North West	Domestic overnight	1,505	26%	$619 m	$145
	Domestic day	1,721	31%	$247 m	$143
	International	21	<1%	$35 m	$56
	Total	3,247	57%	$901 m	
Greater Western Plains	Domestic overnight	872	15%	$375 m	$183
	Domestic day	800	14%	$126 m	$156
	International	8	<1%	$8 m	$48
	Total	1,680	30%	$509m	

Source: TRA NVS and IVS data. 5-year average 2018-2022. DNSW time series (2018-2022)
* Small sample size for day visitors

^ For the same period, Regional NSW[7] is $172 for domestic overnight visitors and $127 for day visitors

[7] DNSW (2022) Regional NSW Visitor Profile - Year ended June 2022; TRA (2022) NVS tourism results YE Jun 22

Visitor Flows

Tracking visitor flows is made complex by the large size of the Outback network, and the borders of its area. The size of the network area has an impact as follows:

- Intra-region travel – a high volume of visitors resides within the network area (75% day visitors, 22% overnight) travelling *between and within* data hubs (see green shaded cells in table below).
- Inter-state visitors tend to visit towns on the edges of the network area more than the interior. For example, Outback receives 14% of overnight visitors from VIC, where NENW receives 5%.
- Major highways intersect the network area, carrying visitors through multiple LGAs and hubs.
- The number of touring routes is extensive across all towns and attractions in the network area.
- Over 95% of visitors drive to the network area, which signifies the importance of understanding the Drive Tourism market and their needs and aspirations.

The location of the network area provides access to multiple domestic visitor markets for both overnight and day visitors. The table below shows the importance of the Sydney segment, however as shown its importance varies greatly for data hubs. There are also marked differences in **interstate** target segments, with Qld being a primary segment for some hubs except the Outback, which clearly has more visitors from Victoria than Queensland, as well as attracting visitors from SA and WA.

Note: Data in the table below is averaged over 5 years from 2018 to 2022 allowing some comparison to data in the previous report (2012-2019) - and differences from before Covid-restrictions. New boundaries for the Central NSW area are used here and will impact comparisons.

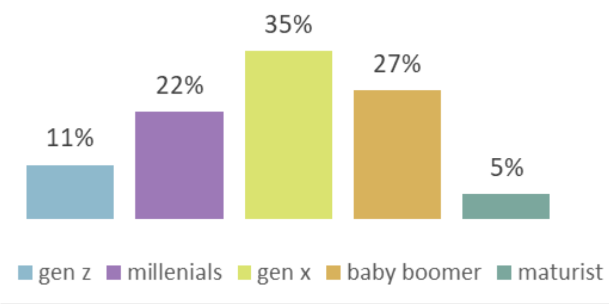
2018-2022 Average	Outback		New England North West		Greater Western Plains		NETWORK AREA	
	Over night	Day	Over night	Day	Over night	Day	Over night	Day
NSW	63%	97%	72%	96%	73%	100%	72%	97%
Sydney	15%	2%	17%	3%	24%	7%	19%	4%
Outback	11%	60%	1%	1%	6%	13%	5%	9%
GWP	8%	20%	3%	3%	7%	49%	6%	18%
NE/NW	2%	3%	16%	75%	3%	2%	11%	48%
Central NSW*	6%	8%	2%	1%	9%	24%	5%	7%
Hunter	6%	-	11%	6%	8%	2%	9%	4%
North Coast	3%	-	13%	6%	3%	-	8%	4%
Riverina	2%	3%	1%	-	2%	1%	1%	1%
Other NSW^	11%	1%	9%	1%	12%	2%	9%	2%
QLD	9%	1%	20%	4%	13%		16%	2%
VIC	14%	2%	5%		9%		7%	1%
ACT	1%		1%		2%		1%	0%
SA	11%		1%		2%		3%	
WA	1%							

Source: TRA NVS data: data for 2018-22 average
*Note: New Central NSW hub boundary used.
^ includes Blue Mountains, Capital Country, Central Coast, Snowy Mountains, South Coast, The Murray

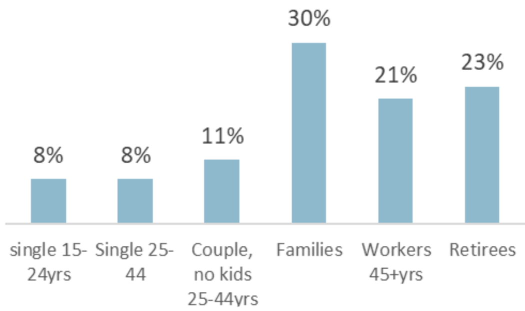
Age and Lifecycle segments

Lifecycle segments discussed in planning documents over the past 5 years identify the 55+ couples and families as key lifecycle segments. Consistent with this analysis, the highest ***overnight*** lifecycle segment in TRA 2019 and 2022 data[8] for the whole network area is families (30%), and retirees (23%). These align with dominance of **Gen X (1964-1980)** and **Baby Boomers (1946-64)** as shown below. However, it is interesting to note prominence of **45+workers** in the TRA data which contributes to the larger **Gen X** segment.

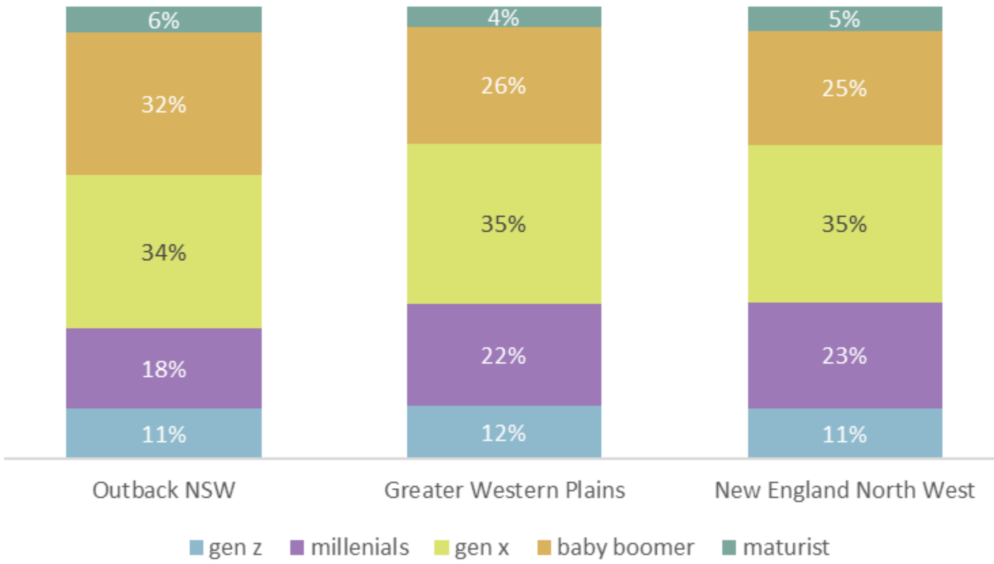
Generation Segments (Age)



TRA Lifecycle Segments



Similar patterns are found in each data hub, with the higher ratios of Gen X and Baby Boomers noted.



Previous travel research suggests Gen X are explorers, seeking travel experiences that include elements of culture, are eager to experience new places. It is estimated that 70% like to explore off-the-beaten-track activities and seek local recommendations – a perfect match to the network area.

Baby Boomers are decisive, confident travellers that prefer active, outdoor exploration and sightseeing, as well as culinary travel experiences – often planning their travels around food and drink. - again, this is a great match to the DNCO network area.[9]

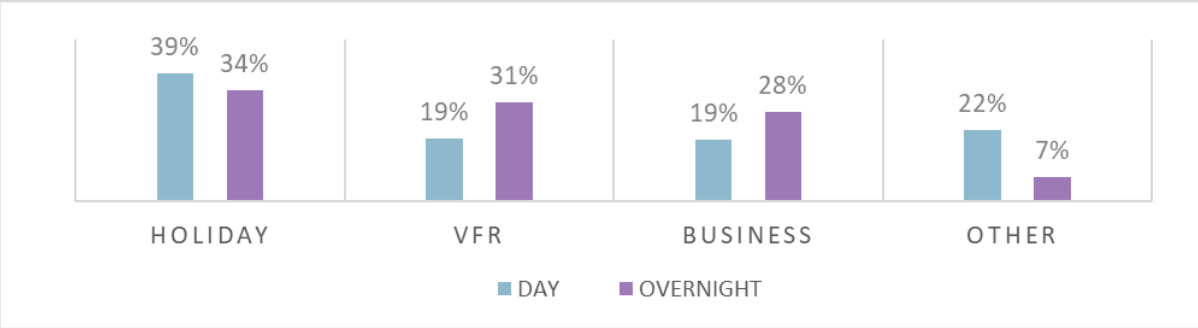
[8] TRA 2018-22 NVS data

[9] https://skift.com/2019/12/11/travel-marketing-across-generations-in-2020-reaching-gen-z-gen-x-millennials-and-baby-boomers/

Reason for travel

Across the whole network area, the main reason for travel is holiday/leisure (39% DAY and 34% ONITE), although VFR (31%) and business travel (28%) is also strong for the overnight market.

High rates of 'other' day travel relate to medical appointments as well as personal appointments. This is often significant as medical visitors are likely to shop or dine in the same trip/destination.



Overnight VFR travel is strongest in the NENW data hub where 35% of overnight visitors are there for that reason. VFR is not as popular in Outback hub (19%).

	Outback		New England North West		Greater Western Plains		NETWORK AREA	
	Overnight	Day	Overnight	Day	Overnight	Day	Overnight	Day
Holiday	41%	37%	31%	42%	36%	35%	34%	39%
VFR	19%	14%	35%	20%	30%	21%	31%	20%
Business	33%	33%	27%	18%	26%	18%	28%	19%
Other	7%	16%	7%	20%	8%	26%	7%	22%

Source: TRA NVS data: data for 2018-22 average

Accommodation choices

Around half of visitors use commercial accommodation including hotels, motels, resort and guesthouses; while 46% use private accommodation such as homes of VFR and free-camping. The NENW has a higher ratio of Private Accommodation users than the other hubs.

	Outback	New England North West	Greater Western Plains	NETWORK AREA
Commercial	56%	48%	57%	54%
Private	44%	52%	43%	46%

Note: TRA does not track visitor use of Air BnB.

Source: TRA NVS data: Average 2012-2021 calendar year

What do they like to do?

Across the whole network area 75% of overnight visitors undertake "social activities" which include dining (40%^), VFR (22%) and shopping (20%). **Dining** is an activity common to all market segments that can be developed to extend expenditure in the network area.

Nature based activities are popular with 18% of overnight visitors enjoying them, however only 11% of day visitors undertake them. Activity trends are similar across the data hubs, with some differences noted between hubs:

- Nature is a key activity in the New England/North West data hub
- Arts/heritage is a key activity in the Outback data hub
- Tourist attractions are the key activity in the Greater Western Plains data hub (250,000 visitors to Taronga Western Plains Zoo per annum) and introduction of the "Attractions Pass".

This is important to understanding the unique selling points of each hub within the region- which are uniquely different to each other. It is also related to the unique experiences of each hub, further explored in the DNCO Experience Analysis Research.

	Outback		New England North West		Greater Western Plains		Network area	
	Over night	Day	Over night	Day	Over night	Day	Over night	Day
Nature	20%	14%	20%	13%	15%	7%	18%	11%
Active sports	15%	9%	16%	10%	13%	4%	15%	8%
Arts/heritage	25%	11%	12%	6%	10%	3%	14%	5%
Attractions	15%	5%	7%	3%	18%	5%	12%	4%
Social activities	73%	52%	77%	67%	73%	70%	75%	67%

** visitors undertake more than one activity - % add up to over 100%

^ 40% of all activities, not of visitors.

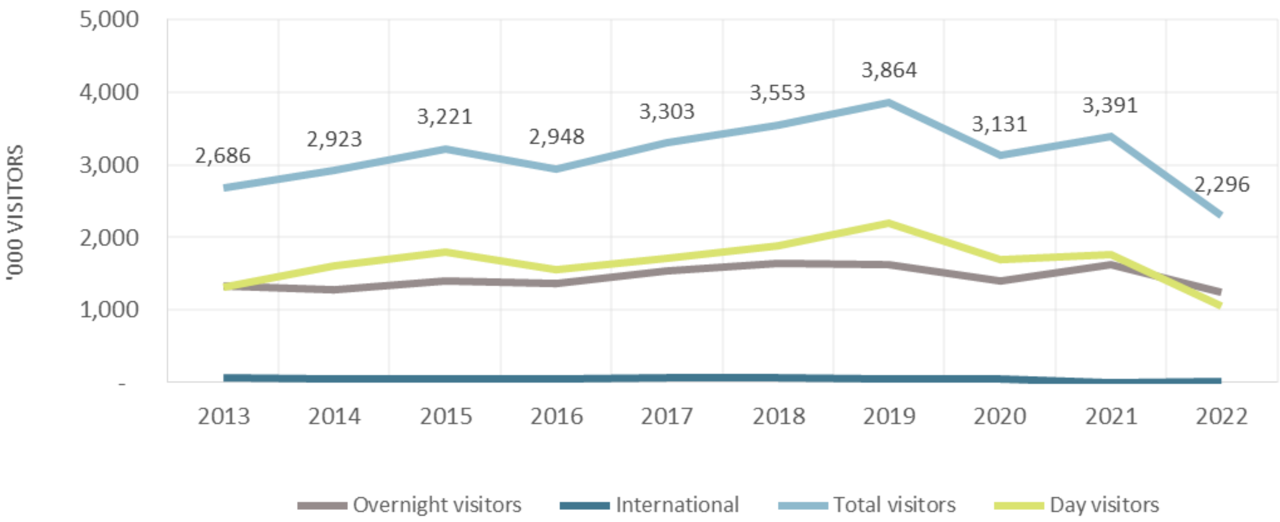
Events and festivals

Visitors also enjoy events such as festivals, concerts, and sporting events, which are a key attraction for many areas in the region. As shown, Covid travel disruptions have had a dramatic impact on arts and other events from the highs in 2019 when one in ten (10%) overnight visitors to the network area attended an event/festival. As stated in the DMP, events can again become a key driver of visitation in the future.

	Outback		**New England North West**		**Greater Western Plains**		**Network area**	
	Over night	Day	Over night	Day	Over night	Day	Over night	Day
2018/9	4%	12%	12%	7%	4%	8%	10%	7%
Av 2018-22	4%	3%	8%	6%	3%	6%	6%	5%

Data hub: New England North West

Trend data (2013-2022) shows visitation to NENW had been steadily increasing to **3.8 million visitors** in the 2018/9 financial year before the impact from COVID_19 saw visitation decrease 41% from that time. The chart below highlights the equal strength of both overnight and day visitors, with day visitation being most impacted from Covid travel restrictions in 2021-22.



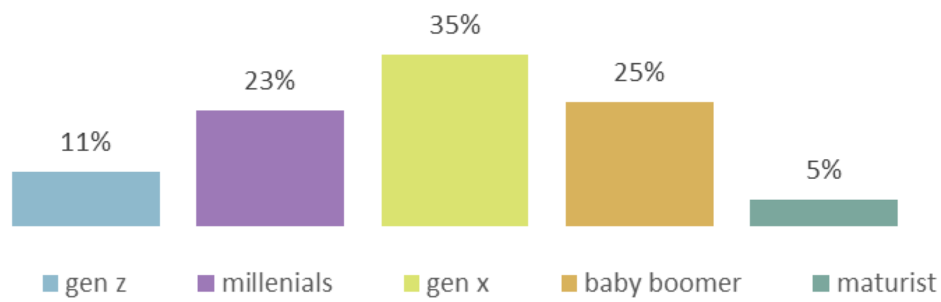
Source: TRA: NVS database (2013-2022)

Over the past 5 years overnight visitors provided less visitors, but more economic impact, at an average of $619m per year.

- Tamworth is the main destination attracting 32% of overnight visitors in the data hub
- Qld is a key segment for overnight visitors (20%)
- Overnight markets are seeking dining (51%) & VFR (41%) experiences as well as nature experiences (20%).

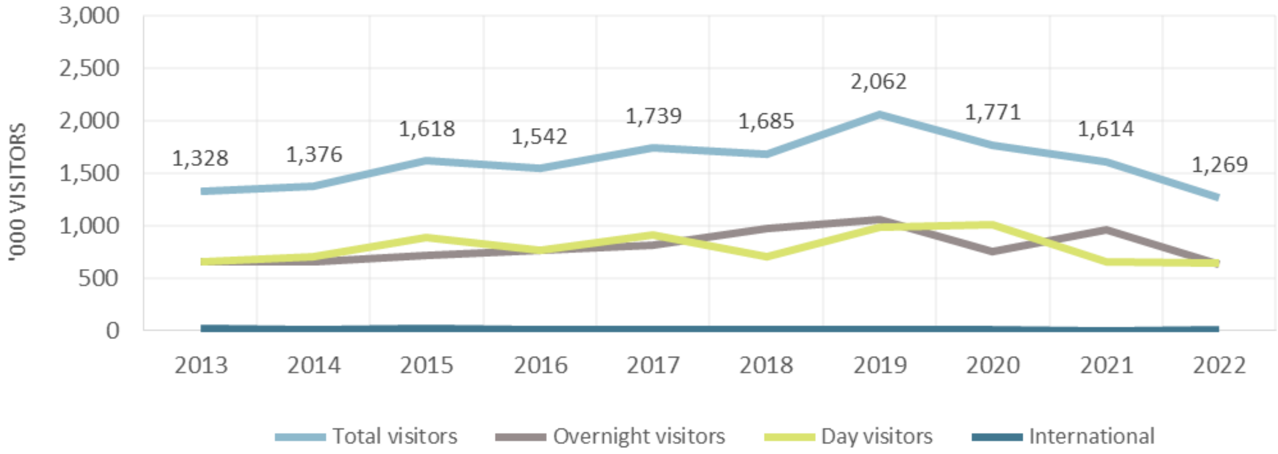
Average 2018-2022	# Visitors	% of total	$ contribution	Domestic $per night	Av night stay
Domestic overnight	1505	46%	$619 m	$145	2.8
Domestic day	1721	53%	$247 m	$143	
International	21	1%	$35 m	$47	
Total	3247	100%	$901 m		

Visitors in both day and overnight markets comprise Gen X families and 45+ workers along with Baby Boomer retirees. NE/NW receives more Millennials (23%) than other parts of the network.



Data hub: Greater Western Plains

Trend data (2013-2022) shows visitation to GWP had been steadily increasing to **2.0 million visitors** in the 2018/9 financial year before the impact from COVID_19 saw visitation decrease 38% from that time. The chart below highlights the equal strength of both overnight and day visitors, with day visitation being hit hardest from Covid travel restrictions in 2021.

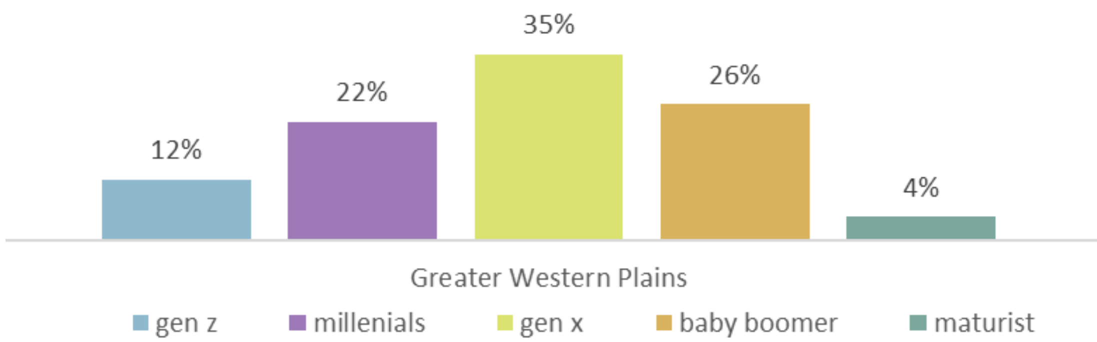


Source: TRA: NVS database (2013-2022)

- Dubbo is the main destination attracting 65% of overnight visitors in the data hub.
- Sydney (24%) is a key segment for overnight visitors
- Overnight markets seeking dining (54%) & VFR (29%); lower interest in nature experiences (15%) and higher interest in tourist attractions (18%) e.g. TWP zoo, Dubbo Gaol, RFDS etc.

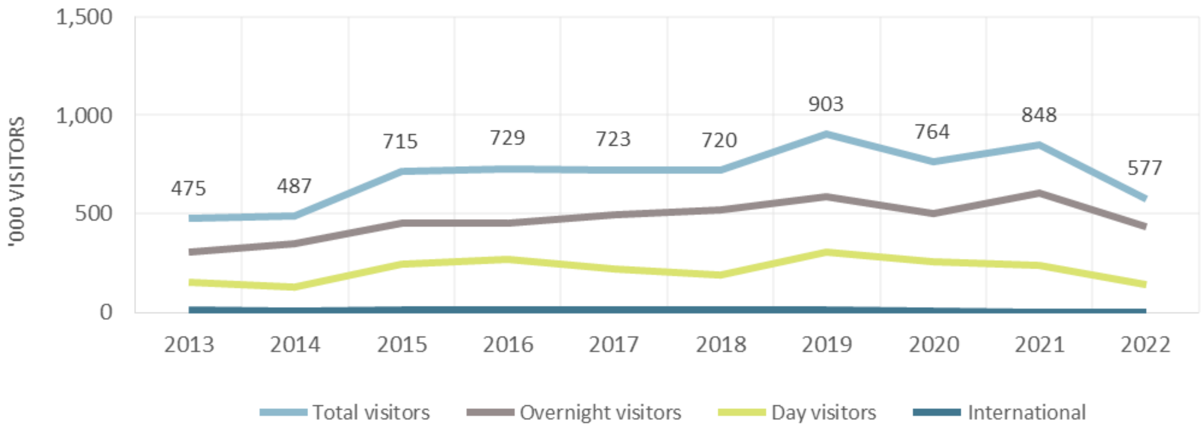
Average 2018-2022	# Visitors	% of total	$ contribution	Domestic $per night	Av night stay
Domestic overnight	872	52%	$375 m	$183	2.3
Domestic day	800	47%	$125 m	$156	
International	8	1%	$8m	$48	
Total	1680	100%	$509m		

Visitors in both day and overnight markets comprise Gen X families and 45+ workers along with Baby Boomer retirees.



Data hub: Outback NSW

Trend data (2013-2022) shows visitation to Outback NSW had been steadily increasing to **0.9 million visitors** in the 2018/9 financial year before the impact from COVID_19 saw visitation decrease 36% from that time. The chart below highlights the strength of overnight market providing 69% of visitors and 84% of economic contribution.



Source: TRA: NVS database (2013-2022)

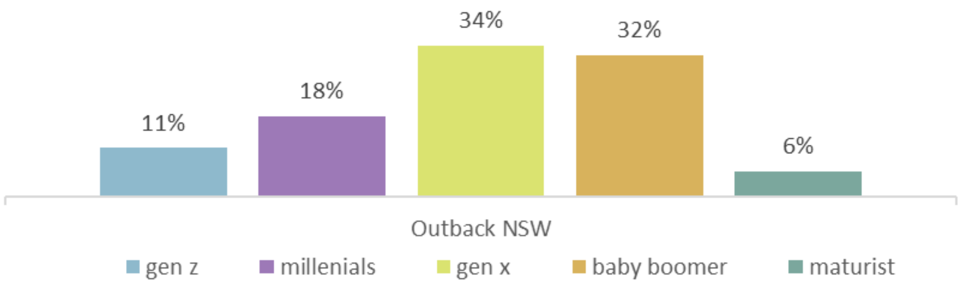
TRA data for **Day Visitors** has a very small sample size and therefore has not been reported by TRA or DNSW as they are statistically too small. As an ***indicator***, it is possible to assess the average number of day trippers over the past 10 years as being approx. 200,000 per year, with most of these visitors coming from within the DNCO network area (60%) often for the purpose of business (30%)[10].

Overnight visitors are the priority market with most visitors from within NSW (63%) and Victoria (14%), as well as SA (11%) and QLD (9%).

- Broken Hill is the main destination attracting 30% of overnight visitors to the data hub.
- Sydney (15%) is a key segment for overnight visitors along with intra-region (e.g. Dubbo)
- All markets seeking dining (46%), pub/clubs (31%) and arts/heritage (25%) experiences.

Average 2018-2022	# Visitors	% of total	$ contribution	Domestic $ per night	Av night stay
Domestic overnight	530	69%	$274 m	$135	3.8
Domestic day	226	30%	$28 m	$123	
International	7	1%	$7 m	$47	
Total	763	100%	$308 m		

Visitors in both day and overnight markets comprise Gen X (working families and couples) along with Baby Boomers (60+ couples). Outback receives more Baby Boomers than other parts of the network.



[10] Low sample sizes mean this information should be considered trends rather than statistics.

Economic contribution of visitation to the network area

Analysis of TRA visitor expenditure data (2018-2022) suggests visitors contribute an average of $1.75 billion per year to the network area in direct expenditure[11]. The following is also noted:

- Expenditure is mostly from Overnight Visitors who contribute an average of $1.3 billion per year; however day visitors also contribute an average of $387 million per year.
- Prior to Covid 19 travel restrictions the international market contributed a total of $47 million per year.
- There is a high volume of visitors travelling within the network area (75% day visitors, 22% overnight intra-region travel) which circulates existing money within the network area, and between data hubs.
- The average overnight expenditure ($155) is lower than other areas in Regional NSW which is $172[12].

DNCO 5-year av 2018-2022	International	Domestic overnight	Domestic day	Total
Visitors (000)	36	2,907	2,747	5,690
Nights (000)	938	8,333	-	9,271
Average stay (nights)	26.1	2.9	-	
Expenditure ($M)	47	1,289	387	$1,723
Av spend per night	$51	$155	$141	

[11] (Average 2018-2022)
[12] DNSW (2022) Regional NSW Visitor Profile - Year ended June 2018, 19,20,21,22.

Appendix 1: Methodology

Data for this report has been downloaded from the TRA National Visitor Survey and International Visitor Survey and reanalysed by staff at Destination Research. TRA conducts statistically reliable surveys of domestic travellers for travel undertaken throughout Australia to provide a pattern of where visitors are travelling and how much that travel is worth to the economy.

TRA data has known issues particularly when analysing smaller segments of visitors coming to regional areas - where the sample size is small the results can be unreliable. In some areas t**he research is therefore considered an indication of visitor trends rather than actual performance measures.**

Despite the slight variations in smaller segments of data the TRA data is the most reliable source of visitor data available, showing historical data over the past 10 years. The best indicator of the reliability of TRA data is the consistency of the results over time. As shown in this report, the ratios of tourists, their activities and accommodation etc remains fairly constant over both five and ten year timeframes.

It is important however to seek further research into specific market segments before basing planning, development or investment decisions on TRA data alone.

Where possible this is cross-checked with published statistics, and data compiled by DNSW and other tourism organisations.

I. The analysis utilises TRA subscription data, with most analysis using a five-year average between 2017-2021. This range accounts for both the years of high visitation of 2017-9 and years of Covid impacts in 2020 and 2021.
II. Analysis in this report also uses a ten-year time series to examine trends over time using a calendar year to December 2021. Other analysis by the TRA is undertaken using year-end in September, March and June, providing slightly different reporting of "yearly" results.
III. TRA data is analysed in statistical areas (SA2) which when combined make up the total LGA. These have then been combined to create a data set for each hub as indicated.
IV. Visitor expenditure data for individual local government areas (LGA), or statistical areas (SA2) is provided yearly by the TRA based on the average of the previous four years.
V. In 2018, TRA revised methods for collecting and analysing international data. This caused some small changes to previously published data. Revised estimates for data prior to 2018 HAS BEEN included in this report.
VI. Sample sizes for each data set are shown in this report and it is acknowledged that the data derived from TRA surveys are subject to sample error. The likelihood of sample error is explained by TRA and should be read before drawing any conclusions or inferences, or taking any action, based on the data. Further information on the methodology used by TRA can be sourced at http://www.tra.gov.au/aboutus/international-visitor-survey-methodology.html

Cover image credit: Destination NSW