

19 August 2020

**To Whom It May Concern**

**RE: Letter of Support for River Sounds, for the Restart Investment to Sustain and Expand (RISE) fund.**

Destination North Coast (DNC) is pleased to provide a letter of support to the organiser of River Sounds, Bellingen NSW, for the Restart Investment to Sustain and Expand (RISE) fund.

The North Coast Destination Management Plan 2018-2021 identifies events and festivals as key strategic pillars which are seen as important opportunities for the region. We support projects that clearly demonstrate the ability to drive increased overnight visitation and/or visitor expenditure and which address an identified demand gap or seasonality.

River Sounds, a 2 day music festival located in the artisan village of Bellingen, will be staged in May, 2021 which is outside peak holiday periods and fills the cultural and economic void caused by the cancellation of existing high profile local music festivals such as Bellow Winter Music. Loosely themed on the likes of Splendour in the Grass and Groovin' the Moo Festivals, this boutique scale event will comprise two stages which will increase performance opportunities for a diverse line up of high profile and emerging artists.

The advent of River Sounds comes from a desire to provide a significant and much needed economic boost to Bellingen Shire struggling in the wake of bushfire impacts followed by the devastation of the Coronavirus Pandemic and subsequent negative impacts on tourism visitation. It will also support casual employment of many local and regional artists and arts workers hard hit by recent events.

The event organiser has plans to use paid social media marketing to increase its profile and participant numbers to the event's primary target market of 25 – 45 year olds, particularly to regional cities and surrounding areas including Tamworth, Dubbo, Arimdale, Newcastle, Taree, Port Macquarie, Coffs Harbour, and Grafton. These out of region visitors will be encouraged to overnight in Bellingen and spend money on accommodation and in cafes and restaurants as well as with stall holders at River Sounds. The organisers anticipate overall 3000 event attendees with approximately 70% of visitors coming from outside the Bellingen Shire, bringing an estimated injection of \$300,000 to the local economy.

The long term goal of the event organisers is for River Sounds to continue as an annual event providing ongoing employment opportunities for artists and arts workers in regional NSW.

Destination North Coast supports this proposal believing it will add value to the region's overall visitor economy.

Yours sincerely



Michael Thurston  
General Manager