

Blacktown City

Tourism
Commercial
Development
Strategy &
Branding Plan

Blacktown Tourism
Network

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16th March, 2004

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Overview

It is a fact of life that Blacktown faces strong competition for the tourist dollar. The Sydney metropolitan area boasts a large number of world-class attractions and sights. In fact, the majority of visitors to Sydney do **not** leave the inner city area.

In the Sydney metropolitan area there are 24 tourist precincts that are actively promoted to local, intrastate and interstate markets through Tourism Sydney. Blacktown is unlikely to meet the requirements to become a Sydney “precinct” in the foreseeable future as it lacks a distinctive, cohesive “experience” such as food, culture or history. Blacktown is also surrounded by areas with stronger product offerings along with natural beauty and sites of historical significance.

The area also battles negative perceptions, which will affect visitor’s opinions of what they may experience in the area. The light industrial development in the area is very positive but is not necessarily ideal for the tourism mix.

It is important that the Blacktown tourism community understands that a goal of the area becoming a major tourism destination for interstate and international visits is unrealistic. The Blacktown area would benefit most from focusing on visitors rather than tourists. This means focusing on increasing the average spend of existing visitors, maximising opportunities from the VFR market and existing operators whilst increasing the number of visits from local and surrounding areas.

Fortunately there is some excellent product in the Blacktown area. Eastern Creek Raceway, Featherdale Wildlife Park and Rouse Hill Estate are recognised tourist attractions with great appeal, whilst Parklea Markets attracts visitors from across the metropolitan area. A review of the available products showed that the sporting product has the most potential for development in the short to medium term. This fits very well with the “outdoor adventure” sporting product offered in the Penrith area and the concentrated number of sporting venues at Sydney Olympic Park, Homebush. This product development strategy also aligns with Council objectives to become a regional centre of sporting excellence attracting major AFL and cricket teams to the area with stadium facilities.

Sporting product and events are also relatively easy to market to the local area. They can be easily promoted to visitors from surrounding areas through Parklea Markets, car yards and other attractions. Sporting events and products are well suited for publicity opportunities and participation in Tourism Sydney promotions, which will increase overall awareness of the area.

Blacktown is very fortunate to have a council that is committed to developing tourism in the area. It also has a network of local tourism operators who are keen to work together to promote the local area. Unlike many tourism committees, which are made up of mainly smaller operators, the Blacktown Tourism Network has representation from all levels including the major attractions in the area. In fact, the major attractions have been very supportive of the network, funding this project, sharing market information and cross-promoting with other members.

Major recommendations in this report include:

- ▶ Focus on the sports product as the primary product group for development and promotion in the short to medium term
 - The sporting product should generally be focussed on families rather than a youth market

- ▶ Concentrate initial awareness marketing on the local government area with a focus on the VFR market
- ▶ Promote Blacktown product to the VFR market in surrounding areas
 - Develop any proactive marketing in the Sydney area based on existing visitor profiles as per Envirometrics research
- ▶ Maximise the potential for marketing to the business and conference market
- ▶ Maintain the existing Blacktown Tourism Network as an informal committee coordinated and supported by Council
 - Ensure a focus on both sport and tourism in the network
 - Encourage food operators to join the network
- ▶ Advertising and marketing material to be funded through contributions from Network members
- ▶ Establish a Visitor Information Centre in the region to increase perception of the Blacktown area as having tourism product
- ▶ The appointment of a fulltime sports and tourism coordinator

Product Review

The product range and mix is vital to creating a strong tourism strategy. Without product there is little to attract visitors to an area. In many cases major natural attractions and scenic beauty such as Sydney Harbour or the Blue Mountains act as the core “product” that attracts visitors. In nearby Penrith the tourism promise is built around rivers, lakes and mountains, whilst the Baulkham Hills Shire capitalises on the Hawkesbury River. Unfortunately Blacktown does not boast significant natural attractions so it cannot rely on the pulling power of natural beauty. In fact, it is often assumed that this lack of natural attractions means that Blacktown has no tourism product.

However, you only need to mention some of the major attractions in the area to gain instant agreement that Blacktown has a strong range of product for the tourism market.

Unlike many locations where products spring up around the natural attractions to capitalise on visitor traffic, Blacktown has well known major attractions that are destinations in their own right.

For the purpose of the product review Blacktown tourism businesses were sorted into a “categories” according to the type of product they delivered (see appendix 1). Some operators appeared in several categories as they have multi-faceted business operations. Festivals and events are also major drivers bringing people into the area so they were allocated a category.

1. Major Attractions

- ▶ Blacktown is fortunate to have five high-quality major attractions in the area. Wonderland Sydney* and Featherdale Wildlife Park are award winning tourism businesses attracting international and local visitors. Eastern Creek International Raceway is also recognised internationally and Rouse Hill Estate is building an excellent reputation in local markets. A major attraction for the local market is Parklea Markets. These businesses all advertise extensively to bring significant numbers of visitors to the area. However, most of these organisations tend to operate primarily as destinations, drawing visitors to their venue for a specific event or a 3 – 4 hour stay. Both Wonderland Sydney and Featherdale Wildlife Park primarily focus on the inbound market and many of their visitors are on tight itineraries. This means it is difficult to leverage off these major attractions to pull visitors to other areas of Blacktown
- ▶ Most major attractions are not readily recognised as Blacktown businesses as their location is given as their local suburb. On the plus side, most of these major attractions are very active within the Blacktown tourism network and are already cross-promoting their products with accommodation providers, sporting venues and Clubs

2. Sporting Venues

- ▶ Blacktown is well represented in this area with a significant number of major sporting venues that draw visitors into the area. Blacktown Olympic Park, Eastern Creek International Raceway, Blacktown Leisure Centre, Stanhope and Valentine Park all host major sporting events. Eastern Creek International Raceway and Valentine Park are very well known in their markets and it is evident that Blacktown Olympic Park and Blacktown Leisure Centre, Stanhope are taking a very proactive approach to increasing awareness of their venues both locally and in

the broader market. The new drag strip at Eastern Creek adds to the growing mix along with the possible development for commercial recreational usage within the open space corridor.

3. Festivals, Events & General Entertainment

- ▶ Like most areas, Blacktown has a number of community festivals that will have appeal to the locals but are unlikely to attract significant numbers of visitors. The exception to this is Britfest, an established event which continues to attract up to 40,000 visitors each year
- ▶ The Battle of Vinegar Hill re-enactment in March 2004 was very successful but was a "one-off" event
- ▶ There are a large number of State, National and International sporting events held at venues in the Blacktown area. In 2004 events include:
 - **Blacktown Olympic Park**
 - Police Games
 - NSW Catholic Colleges Gala Day Baseball
 - Independent Schools Softball Finals
 - NSWSA Slow pitch Tournament
 - U23 Men's Softball Nationals
 - Women's Softball Grand Prix Series 3
 - U23 Men's Baseball Nationals
 - NSWIS Baseball Holiday Camp
 - Blacktown International Women's Test Series
 - NSW U19 Male & Female Qualifier Softball
 - NSWSA Masters Softball Tournament
 - U16 Development Squad Friendship Softball Series
 - NSW U19 Male & Female Softball Championship
 - National Baseball Championships (Claxton Shield)
 - **Eastern Creek Raceway**
 - Shell Advance Australian Superbikes
 - V8 Supercars
 - NSW State Championship
 - PROCAR 16
 - Formula Xtreme
 - **Blacktown Leisure Centre, Stanhope**

4. Heritage and Culture

- ▶ This product category is not well developed in the Blacktown area. There is an excellent Art Centre and Rouse Hill Estate is a significant drawcard but will be closed for several months over the summer period. There is a very popular "ghost tour" held monthly at St Bartholomew's and several historical buildings but most attractions are not open often enough to actively promote.
- ▶ There is no aboriginal tourism product in the area but funding has been allocated for an Aboriginal Cultural Centre

5. Parks and Nature

- ▶ There are a limited number of parks and natural attractions in the area including the popular Nurragingy Reserve. These would have most appeal to the local market and are ideal for family gatherings and picnics

6. Major Retail

- ▶ Westpoint Shopping Centre is the major retail mall in the area. It is currently undergoing a refurbishment and when complete it is expected to draw a significant number of visitors to Blacktown from a catchment area bounded by Penrith, Parramatta, Castle Hill and Fairfield/Liverpool. As a retail centre it is unlikely to become an attraction for the tourist market but it can give tourism businesses excellent access to the local market
- ▶ Parklea Markets is another key retail drawcard for the area attracting over a million visitors per annum. Parklea Markets has a much broader catchment area than the Westpoint Shopping Centre, attracting visitors from all over the metropolitan area
- ▶ In the future (2008) the Rouse Hill Regional Centre will provide a broad range of retail services for the community

7. Clubs, Hotels

- ▶ Blacktown is well serviced for clubs and local hotels. Most of these target the local market. Major clubs such as the Rooty Hill RSL and Blacktown Workers Club may have a role to play in the tourism strategy through promotion of their food outlets to the tourist market
- ▶ There are a number of venues that will have immediate appeal to the tourist notably Ettamogah Pub, Royal Cricketers Arms Hotel and the Eastern Creek Tavern. There is also potential to promote The Mean Fiddler in Rouse Hill to improve the product range in this category

8. Function/Conference Centres

- ▶ There are approximately 40 function rooms in the area ranging from small meeting rooms to the Rooty Hill RSL which can accommodate up to 540 delegates. This broad range is ideal to meet the needs of the growing business and light industrial sectors in the area. The close proximity of major attractions and sporting venues enhances the appeal of the function and conference centre product range

9. Accommodation

- ▶ Compared to Parramatta, the range of accommodation in the Blacktown area is poor. Although there are excellent operators in most categories of accommodation there is not the range to meet the needs of the market, particularly the family traveller. It is encouraging to see operators such as Parklea Gardens Village actively target the tourist market with their four star cabins. However, the limited range of accommodation means it is difficult to position Blacktown as a destination for a long stay

10. Restaurants

- ▶ There are a limited number of restaurants in the area. There are a number of neighbourhood restaurants serving Chinese food or pizzas along with a few chain restaurants such as Lone Star, La Porchetta and Outback Steakhouse. There are very few fine dining restaurants or upmarket cafes that would appeal to the tourist market. Major hotels and clubs in the area have a number of dining options which can be offered to "flesh out" the restaurant offering. In recent months Nunzio's Pizza & Pasta Restaurant and Thai Spice restaurant have opened in Stanhope Gardens. It also has recently been announced that the Westpoint development will include an outdoor eating precinct which will provide café and restaurant alternatives for visitors to the Blacktown area

11. Cafés

- ▶ There are very few cafes in the area that would appeal to the tourist market. Many listed in this category are traditional takeaway or lunch outlets and most are located in shopping centres or retail strips primarily catering for the local, trades or light industrial market. There is little outdoor dining and anecdotal evidence suggests that it is difficult to get good coffee in the area. It is generally accepted that quality coffee is a major attraction for the tourist market

12. Transport and Tour Operators

- ▶ There are a number of tour operators in the area who specialise in small group tours. At this stage there are no operators who focus solely on tours of local product

Conclusion

A product review of the Blacktown area has identified a significant number of major attractions and a strong focus on sporting activities. Currently the weakest product areas are food and accommodation.

* On February the 17th it was announced that Wonderland would be closing in April 2004. The product review phase of this project was completed at the time of this announcement so reference to Wonderland has been left as is to reflect the situation during the research phase. The closure of Wonderland has been considered and addressed in the strategy development phase of the project.

Product Support Review

“Build it and they will come” may have been an effective tourism strategy when the market was less sophisticated and there were far fewer competitors. These days, individual operators and groups of tourism product need support to deliver customers to the business. This support can come from infrastructure, group marketing, tourism or business organisations, and local or state government. In Blacktown the support comes from roadways, public transport, the Blacktown City Council, Tourism Sydney, Department of State & Regional Development and BASI.

Roadways

The road system is improving rapidly and effectively reducing the time it takes to reach the area. Key improvements include:

- ▶ The M4 motorway which links Sydney and the Blue Mountains and passes through Blacktown Shire
- ▶ The M2 motorway which has reduced the travel time to Blacktown by 25 minutes
- ▶ The M7 Westlink which transverses Blacktown, will significantly improve access to some of Blacktown’s major sporting and tourist attractions. The M7 Westlink is due for completion by 2006

Public Transport

Most of the tourist attractions and sporting venues in the Blacktown area are not well serviced by the public transport system. The rail timetable primarily services the local commuter market. Attempts by one major attraction to offer a rail pass failed when the local bus operator was unable to offer a consistent service with air-conditioned buses. Local bus companies are again focused primarily on the local commuter market.

Blacktown City Council

Tourism is now recognised as a key area for economic development by the Blacktown City Council. They have committed funds to the employment of an Economic Development Officer (EDO) with responsibilities for tourism and have funded and supported activities such as the Greater Sydney Tourism project. Through the EDO they have also been instrumental in establishing the current Blacktown Tourism Network. The vision for the area is “A city that develops as a local, regional and international tourism destination”. Given the present product range this is a laudable goal which will not be achieved in the foreseeable future. In practical terms, it is unlikely that tourism will take precedence over planned industrial development in areas such as transport, storage, warehousing, distribution, logistics and manufacturing. The council has an excellent track record in industrial development which has created strong economic growth and benefits for the community at large. The recent loss of Wonderland Sydney and the rezoning of the Wonderland site for commercial use may be seen by some members of the tourism community as a demonstration that industrial development is more important than tourism. This is despite the fact that this issue was outside the control of Blacktown City Council.

NSW Department of State & Regional Development

The Department has funded this project to consolidate the Blacktown Tourism Network, identify its future and recommend strategies for developing the tourism network and tourism product in the area. Their Business Development Manager in the tourism area is available to work with individual operators and can also offer advice to the network in general. There are a number of small business assistance programs which tourism businesses in the Blacktown area may be eligible for. These include Women in Business, Home-Based Business, High Growth Business and Small Business Expansion programs.

Tourism Sydney

Tourism Sydney is very supportive of Blacktown's efforts to define and promote its tourism product. However, most of Tourism Sydney's funding is allocated to supporting the 28 recognised precincts in the Sydney metropolitan area. Blacktown does not currently meet the criteria to become a "precinct" and are unlikely to do so in the short to medium term. However, Tourism Sydney is keen to support the area with access to research and advice. They are also interested in encouraging individual operators to participate in their programs such as "Easter in Sydney".

BASI

Blacktown is fortunate to have an active business advisory service in BASI. This local organisation will have a role to play in supporting tourism operators and providing opportunities for networking, skills and knowledge development.

Historical Review

Until recently it would appear that tourism has not been a major focus in the Blacktown area. Although tourism strategy documents were produced in 1991 and 1995, followed by a Tourism Action Plan in 1996, implementation of strategies was generally delegated to committees and volunteers, which meant that only limited outcomes could be achieved. (The council created a position for a Tourism Officer in 1991 but this position was not maintained after 1992).

From a detailed review of these plans it is clear that many of the key issues identified still impact on the Blacktown tourism industry in 2004.

These include:

- ▶ The importance of tourism to the local economy given the fact that Blacktown has five million visitors to the area per annum
- ▶ The lack of an overall strategy for marketing the area
- ▶ The need for a central point such as a Visitor Information Centre to disseminate information
- ▶ Negative perceptions of Blacktown in the marketplace
- ▶ The need to inform and educate the local market
- ▶ The need for improved tourism signage on road and rail links to and through the area
- ▶ The need for additional accommodation
- ▶ The need for a logo and positioning statement specifically for tourism
- ▶ The need for a marketing document that is specific to Blacktown. (In 1991 a video presentation was in existence)
- ▶ Potential to capitalise on sporting product
- ▶ The opportunity to develop an Aboriginal Culture Centre
- ▶ Potential for new major attractions

Since the strategy document of 1995 there have been some very positive developments in the Blacktown area. These include:

- ▶ Increased accommodation, notably the development of The Travelodge and Holiday Inn hotels
- ▶ Increased number of sporting venues including the Blacktown Olympic Park and the Blacktown Leisure Centre, Stanhope
- ▶ Upgrade of Rouse Hill Park and increased marketing of Rouse Hill House
- ▶ Blacktown Council's commitment to the tourism sector and appointment of an Economic Development and Tourism Officer in 2002
- ▶ Opening of the M2 Motorway which has decreased travelling time to the area
- ▶ Commencement of the Westlink M7
- ▶ Formation of the Blacktown Tourism Network which is well supported by the local tourism industry

The 1995 Strategy document does an excellent job of identifying and defining the key issues affecting the Blacktown area. The 1996 Action Plan details the action items necessary to implement the strategies.

In hindsight it is clear that a major problem has been implementation of these action items. The Blacktown City Tourism Association was formed in March 1996 and responsibility for implementation fell primarily upon volunteer committees. There was also general apathy amongst operators and anecdotal evidence suggests that several committees floundered due to lack of time and resources to commit to tourism projects.

The appointment of an Economic Development Officer, Ben Artup, in 2002 has generated more interest and focus in the tourism market. The EDO has spent a lot of time "getting to know" the tourism community and understanding their needs and wants. He has implemented several initiatives including a regular "What's On" newsletter for operators, participation in the Greater Sydney Tourism, Business Tourism project and inclusion of tourist information in general marketing material for the area. He has also formed strong working relationships with Tourism Officers and EDO's from surrounding areas.

The most important change since 1996 has been the willingness of local tourism operators to work together to promote the local area. Unlike many tourism committees, which are made up of mainly smaller operators, the Blacktown Tourism Network has representation from all levels including the major attractions in the area. In fact, the major attractions have been very supportive of the network, funding this project, sharing market information and cross-promoting with other members.

Marketing Material Review

There is very little marketing literature available from pre-2000 except for a "Tourism Out West" newsletter. Current marketing material includes:

- ▶ A full-page feature in the "Discover Greater Sydney" guide. This page also appears on the Discover Greater Sydney website
- Wonderland Sydney is featured as the masthead of this promotion
- It features key products in the area - Featherdale Wildlife Park, Rouse Hill Estate, Wonderland Sydney and Blacktown Workers Club
- Copy and design are appropriate for the target market
- ▶ A one page overview of Blacktown City which promotes function facilities, activities and accommodation and was distributed at the 2001 "Sydney on Sale" trade show
- ▶ A two page feature in the Mice.net magazine promoting conference and accommodation facilities
- This promotion "twins" Blacktown with Parramatta product. High quality pictures promote Wonderland Sydney, Rooty Hill RSL and Holiday Inn along with Blacktown Leisure Centre Stanhope and Blacktown Olympic Park. The heading Booming Blacktown gives an impression of development and growth
- Wonderland Sydney is featured as the masthead of this promotion
- The copy and style of the material is appropriate for the business travel market
- The council logo is prominent on the lead page
- ▶ Leisure and Tourism section on Blacktown City Council website
- This material is well presented and provides an excellent overview of attractions, events and services in the area
- A Google web search for Blacktown Tourism brings up the Council website as the second listing
- ▶ "What's On" newsletter – distributed to operators
- This is a simple black and white A4 sheet of paper detailing events. It does not include pictures, logos or branding elements
- ▶ It should also be noted that venues such as Blacktown Olympic Park and Blacktown Leisure Centre, Stanhope that are owned and operated by Blacktown City Council have high quality marketing material has been produced for both these organisations. Although the marketing material is specific to their particular target markets, both have a high energy, family feel to their branding.

In general terms the existing marketing material is all professionally presented and features high quality pictures. Understandably there is no clear brand or image associated with this marketing. The name Blacktown is presented in a variety of colours and fonts and there is little consistency across the marketing mediums.

Network Review

The Blacktown Tourism Network was established to increase the level of visitation and spending in Blacktown City. It aims to develop innovative approaches to promoting the City as a recognised visitor destination through collaborative marketing, branding and packaging. It also aims to support the development of new tourism product.

The Blacktown Tourism Network is made up of over 40 committed tourism operators and associated businesses and organisations from the Blacktown area. The network was formed in December 2002 following the appointment of EDO, Ben Artup.

The Network launched with a Tourism Forum in December 2002 which attracted 38 potential members, many of who went on to become active participants. The launch was followed by a series of planning workshops to identify key issues, opportunities and threats likely to impact on tourism in the area. Attendance was excellent at approximately 10 - 15 members at each meeting. This was followed with a member survey which gathered information on visitation and tourism development. Most network members responded to the survey.

The network currently meets monthly at a Members' premises to network and discuss issues relevant to the Blacktown tourism community.

A database of 78 businesses receives invitations to network meetings.

Attendance averages 15 – 20 members with regulars along with occasional attendees. There are some notable strengths in the Network:

- ▶ Members participate from all levels of the industry
- ▶ The Network has the support of the major attractions in the area such as Wonderland Sydney, Featherdale Wildlife Park, Rooty Hill RSL and Blacktown Olympic Park
- Representatives who attend the meetings are senior in their organisation. For example, a regular attendee is Mark Thomas the General Manager of Featherdale who attends with his marketing manager Andrew Greenway
- ▶ The Network includes interested businesses and organisations from outside the traditional tourism sector. For instance QIC, the owners of Westpoint, send a representative to most meetings. Wendy Collins from business advisory service BASI has also been supportive of the group
- ▶ The group is inclusive, making an effort to welcome newcomers
- ▶ The network has strong support from the Blacktown City Council. EDO Ben Artup coordinates venues and emails invitations to the Network
- ▶ The Network has a positive outlook. Unlike other groups this Network sees it's role as capitalizing on opportunities rather than bemoaning problems or looking for outside organisations to solve their problems
- ▶ There is a culture of sharing information. This is very evident with the larger operators who are generous with market information which is useful to smaller operators who don't have access to industry information
- ▶ There is a history of cross-promotion and partnerships with several members working together to promote their products

Although this Network is informal, it is very effective. Unlike some organisations there is no time spent on administration or keeping the Network alive. In its current form it has the potential to be self-supporting. Members who host meetings provide catering and members who choose to participate in marketing or promotional activities pay the cost of that activity. The Blacktown City Council EDO provides a secretariat service for the Network distributing information and coordinating networking and promotional activities. On average he spends 1.5 days per week on the tourism sector. In addition to the Network activities he also represents the area at trade shows, attends functions, talks to new operators and sources potential tourism operators for the area.

Market Review

Market Perception

Anecdotal evidence suggests that although the name Blacktown enjoys high recognition, the area is not generally regarded as a tourism destination.

Until recently there had been no specific promotion of Blacktown and mainstream publications tend not to recognise Blacktown as a tourism area. This is partly because there is no Visitor Information Centre or focus for tourism activities. However Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) research identified that Blacktown is NSW's third most popular destination by number of visitors (5 million per annum).

The perception of Blacktown within NSW has traditionally been driven by the negative publicity the area received in the mid eighties as an unsafe area. Blacktown was categorised as the "Western Suburbs" and affected by the cultural cringe of this positioning.

In fact, Blacktown is Australia's fastest growing city whose proudly multicultural population enjoy a great quality of life. There are increasing numbers of middle to senior level business relocating to the area and the socio economic profile of the area is steadily improving.

Economic growth in the area has been driven by the development of high quality industrial parks and Council initiatives that have encouraged industries to relocate to the area.

The real estate market is buoyant and major companies and organisations have also recognised Blacktown's strengths. Since the early 1990's over 500 major companies have relocated to Huntingwood and Arndell Park. Although research, census data and experience has shown that the area has enjoyed considerable growth and prosperity since the 1980's, perception is reality and Blacktown still battles those misconceptions.

Members of Blacktown Tourism Network identified common perceptions of the area as:

- ▶ Blue collar area, a working man's suburb
- ▶ Unsafe
- ▶ In the Western Suburbs
- ▶ A long way out

This negative perception of Blacktown has led many businesses over the years to overcome this problem by removing the name Blacktown from their business or identifying their location as their suburb within the Blacktown LGA. This is understandable but does perpetuate some of the perceptions as the possible impact of these businesses does not reflect on the Blacktown name.

Tourism Trends

As Blacktown is not a destination market in the traditional sense, most tourism trends will not have a significant impact on the area. It should be noted that some operators within the Blacktown area who target the inbound market e.g. Featherdale Wildlife Park and Wonderland Sydney will be affected by global trends such as SARS, avian flu and terrorism alerts.

Market Boundary

Logistically, the marketing boundary for Blacktown will be driven by the available resources such as funds and the time required for marketing. Although it is tempting to assume that “everyone” is a potential tourist to the area it is more practical in the short term to take a strategic approach. From discussions with Blacktown Tourism Network members a number of assumptions were made:

- ▶ International or interstate visitors are unlikely to make Blacktown their destination unless they were visiting friends and relatives or attending an event in the area
- ▶ There is potential to change the perceptions of Blacktown in the wider market although this may not generate business in the short to medium term
- ▶ Until the accommodation and food offerings are improved it is unrealistic to promote Blacktown to the wider market as a long stay destination
- ▶ Most visitors to the area would be day trippers or enjoying a stopover on their way to another destination
- ▶ The local and Sydney metropolitan market would be the primary targets for initial marketing activities

Target Markets

Blacktown Tourism Network members identified six potential target markets for the Blacktown Tourism strategy:

- ▶ Local market
- ▶ Visiting Friends and Relatives Tourism (VFR)
- ▶ Business Tourism
- ▶ Sports Tourism
- ▶ Recreational Tourism
- Surrounding areas
- Sydney metropolitan
- Regional
- Interstate
- ▶ Cultural Tourism

Local Market

There are significant opportunities to promote Blacktown’s tourism product to the LGA. This consists of postcode areas 2146, 2148, 2149, 2155, 2760, 2761, 2762, 2763, 2764, 2765, 2766, 2767, and 2770.

Within the local area there are many target markets:

- ▶ Families with 2+ kids
- ▶ Single parents
- ▶ 18-35 year old males
- ▶ Church groups
- ▶ Ethnic communities
- ▶ Schools
- ▶ Seniors
- ▶ Shoppers (are mostly price driven)

These markets are very easy to reach cost effectively through Blacktown Council and local visibility. Proactive marketing campaigns are likely to produce increases in revenue or visitation for local tourism businesses in the short to medium term.

VFR (Visiting Friends and Relatives)

This market is identified as **local** or from the **Greater West** but mostly **within a 30-minute drive from Blacktown**. This target market also included cultural VFR where relatives visit from overseas for a longer period, often for a major event such as a newborn baby. This market is easy to reach cost effectively through marketing to the local LGA. Surrounding areas can also be reached through joint marketing with neighbouring Shires and publications which can be distributed through VIC's. Proactive marketing campaigns are likely to produce increases in revenue or visitation for local tourism businesses in the short to medium term.

Sports Tourism

The market boundary for this tourism business will be **local, interstate** and **national** as it will be targeted at teams looking to stage major events or conduct training camps. Target markets are:

- ▶ Sports education
- ▶ Motor sports
- ▶ Ball sports
- ▶ Clubs/associations
- ▶ National sporting teams
- ▶ State teams – training camps
- ▶ Corporations/industries

This market can easily be reached by the local operators of sporting venues who already have contacts and networks in this area. In this target market the tourism strategy should aim to support the efforts of existing sports tourism operators and cross-promote the other attractions and services in the area. Proactive marketing in this area is likely to generate increased revenue for the broader tourism market in the medium to long term.

Business Tourism

The marketing boundary for attracting business should be **local companies** and **NSW regional areas** to capitalise on Blacktown's central location. Submarkets of this are:

- ▶ Incentive travel companies
- ▶ Professional conference organisers
- ▶ New companies to the area
- ▶ Existing companies

Local companies can easily be reached through accommodation, function and conference providers in the area. The existing participation in the Greater Sydney Tourism, Business Tourism project is already giving operators access to the broader market including NSW regional areas. The Tourism strategy could support this effort with direct marketing to local businesses through Blacktown Council publications. This will see short term increases in revenue for operators in this market.

Recreational Tourism

This could also be termed "general" tourism. The aim for this market would be to increase awareness of the area and change the perceptions of Blacktown as a tourist destination. Opportunities to market will come from:

- ▶ Surrounding areas
- ▶ Sydney metropolitan

- ▶ Regional
- ▶ Interstate

This is the most difficult market to reach as it is a mass market. Therefore the approach here will be opportunistic rather than just strategic. This means identifying and taking up cost effective opportunities to reach the broader market through trade shows and publications. These will need to be evaluated on a case-by-case basis for suitability. The aim of this marketing is to present the product mix and total offer for Blacktown and change the perceptions of the area. As interest in the area increases, establishing a Visitor Information Centre would be an obvious way of disseminating this information in the medium to long term.

Cultural Tourism

At this stage there is very little cultural product apart from Rouse Hill Estate and the Blacktown Arts Centre. Initially the market boundary for any marketing would be the **local** area and would focus on local attractions and festivals. Although cultural tourism is not a focus of this Tourism strategy in the short to medium term, there is potential to develop and significantly improve the product mix in the next 5 – 10 years.

Surrounding Areas

Baulkham Hills Shire

Tourism focus has been on the northern part of the Shire, The Hawkesbury. The Hills Shire is working closely with Tourism Hawkesbury to market this area. This area has the strongest appeal for the drive market.

Until recently there has been little focus on the southern part of the Shire, The Hills District. This is under review at present. Traditionally the visitor perception of this area was a "country drive" but is now moving towards nurseries, coffee shops and cafés as the food offering improves. There are 64 plant nurseries in the area but very little "traditional" tourism product. There are some niche markets in the area such as bird watching.

There is a high level of VFR – estimated up to 55%.

The major event for the area is the Orange Blossom Festival, but there are a host of smaller events such as the Galston Country Music Festival which are highlighted in marketing material. The tourism officer for the area sees potential in creating more events to use as drivers to the area.

Marketing initiatives include:

- ▶ "What's On" guide
- ▶ Council website
- ▶ "Sydney's Natural Best" – an annual publication of 100,000 copies

There is a 7-day a week Visitor Information Centre staffed by volunteers located at the Pines in Dural. This has very low visitation at around 400 per month. They are looking at relocating the VIC and are discussing a partnership with Rouse Hill Estate which is in Blacktown Shire.

They also considering setting up satellite VIC's in four locations – Wisemans Ferry, Baulkham Hills, Rouse Hill, Cattai or Pit Town.

There is potential to:

- ▶ Set up a joint VIC venture with the Hills Shire
- ▶ Set up joint project to capitalise on aboriginal sites – Cattai National Park
- ▶ Share operator training opportunities

Parramatta

There is less focus on target markets in the Parramatta tourism strategy. They tend to work on joint projects with Greater Sydney Tourism. The current strategy has a strong focus on promotion of heritage and development of indigenous product. The area has a strong food and dining sector along with high levels of accommodation although this tends to be business focused.

Marketing initiatives include:

- ▶ Visitors Guide using Bathurst Guide as a model
- ▶ Improved gateway information
- ▶ A new map including 78 things to do in the area
- ▶ Weekend Explorer bus
- ▶ Investigating GROW project to promote aboriginal product in the area
- ▶ Developing a "brand" for the area - "Parramatta First"

Parramatta has some sporting product but this does not feature strongly in promotion. Venues include:

- ▶ Parramatta Raceway
- ▶ Sydney Olympic Park
- ▶ Golden Slipper at Randwick Racecourse
- ▶ Parramatta Stadium (home to Parramatta League & Soccer teams)

Sporting events in the area include Sydney Olympic Park to Parramatta Park Fun Run. Traditionally there has been a poor response to local seminars for tourism operators.

Penrith

Penrith are the most sophisticated tourism marketers of the surrounding areas. They have well developed strategies and show great consistency in their marketing. They have a well defined target market and a strong positioning statement - Rivers Mountains Lakes. Much of their marketing is directed at the local market. The area also enjoys a large number of VFR's.

The area has significant natural attractions and there is a focus on recreation and sporting activities, in particular adventure for the younger market. Sporting venues include the White-water Rafting Stadium.

In addition to the Panthers Club the area has a Performing Arts Centre and a well-established local theatre group.

The lakes tend to be the centre of attractions. Their Visitor Information Centre attracts 20,000 visitors per annum.

Accommodation includes:

- ▶ Holiday Inn
- ▶ Penrith Motor Inn
- ▶ Nepean Inn
- ▶ 3 – B & B's
- ▶ Log Cabin Motel
- ▶ Panthers World of Entertainment

The major festival is the Penrith Valley Festival in March but there are a number of local events and sporting events during the year.

Marketing initiatives include:

- ▶ Penrith Valley Experience
- ▶ Visitors guide – DL brochure letterbox drop
- ▶ Shopping Centre promotions
- ▶ Mini flyers e.g. 10 free things to do
- ▶ Tour Ideas kit and Coach manual – development of tours
- ▶ Setting up virtual networks of operators

Panthers conduct joint promotions Wonderland Sydney and Featherdale Wildlife Park packaging accommodation with their major attractions.

SWOT Review

A SWOT analysis was conducted with members of the Blacktown Tourism Network to identify the key issues likely to impact on development and implementation of the Tourism strategy.

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ Several major tourism venues and the knowledge within in these facilities to promote tourism ★ The size and growth of Blacktown City in terms of its business and residential expansion ★ Accessibility of Blacktown City both in terms of good transport infrastructure and services ★ The cultural diversity of Blacktown City's residents and visitors (both VFR and at facilities) ★ Proximity to other highly frequented destinations such as the Blue Mountains and Sydney <p>The venues, area, size are our strength</p> <p>Largest business area</p> <p>Easy to get to freeway</p> <p>Established facilities, historical relevance, and new growth facilities, diversity</p> <p>Cost of venues and shopping</p> <p>Easy parking as opposed to city</p> <p>Quality accommodation</p> <p>Blue Mountains is our most popular tourist point</p> <p>Blacktown Olympic Park, can be tremendous opportunity to give information</p> <p>Wonderland, Featherdale, Eastern Creek, golf courses, West Point, Rooty Hill RSL,</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ Low awareness of Blacktown City as a tourism venue and the city's facilities and product ★ The stigma of the name "Blacktown" and being perceived, at times, negatively by Sydneysiders as "Western Suburbs" <p>Lack of water venues</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ No Visitor Information Centre (VIC) or even local knowledge of products and facilities ★ Poor sign posting of Blacktown City's facilities ★ Only modest number of accommodation providers <p>In Western Sydney, far from the City</p> <p>Hot in summer</p> <p>Gives idea to an outsider what Blacktown represents</p> <p>Facilities should be offered to those who will be visiting Blacktown area</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ Local residents should know about tourism more <p>We should represent our product more e.g. - Trade Show</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ Sign posting <p>Traffic name infrastructure of roadways</p> <p>Lack of water sports</p> <p>Lack of knowledge of products and facilities</p>

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
Olympic Stadium	★ Stigma of the 50's- 80's Blacktown and stigma of the "name"
Wealth of product history	
Geographic location	Lack of awareness of facilities out here in Blacktown
International chain hotel, motel in area	
New Greg Norman Golf Complex	
Multicultural aspect	
★ Knowledge within area	
Biggest Government area	
Transport infrastructure	

★ Key Issues

Economic

OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
Increasing disposable income of residents	Australian dollar
Socio economic profile of new residents	Mortgage interest rates could mean less disposable income
Australian dollar	Spending power of economically disadvantage people
★ Increased access from M7 Westlink	Not necessarily perceived as a growth area
Potential for infrastructure	
Increased levels of business investment	
Growth of area – sustained and proved	
Land and potential for growth	
★ Expansion of shopping centres	
Attitude of growth	

★ Key Issues

Political

OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
Strength in numbers	★ Area can get forgotten in
Larger players in the area	★ Tourism focus – not scenic
	Labour stronghold

OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<p>Larger players in the area</p> <p>Labour stronghold</p> <p>More political clout</p> <p>Shift in State Govt. focus</p> <p>Trend for relocation</p> <p>Increased representation on committees</p> <p>M7 Westlink easier access for employees</p> <p>Eastern Creek/Wonderland site offices</p> <p>★ Improved perception of the area created by the standard of new developments such as industrial areas and new suburbs</p> <p>★ Councillors supportive of Tourism</p> <p>Potential to be a “benchmark” community</p>	<p>Labour stronghold</p> <p>Legislation – changes</p> <p>Poker machine tax</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Insurance - Loss of local operators <p>Future relocation further out</p> <p>M7 Westlink possible disruption to business</p> <p>Noise of M7 Westlink for individual venues/operators</p> <p>Potential for negative PR</p> <p>Government change</p>

★ Key Issues

Social

OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<p>Population is younger</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Generation X <p>★ People stay in the area</p> <p>★ Immigration to the area</p> <p>High number of VFR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - parents/grandparents - return visits <p>★ Potential for “local” tourism</p> <p>★ Family focus of the area</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - picnic areas <p>Indigenous population (6,000) largest % in Australia</p> <p>★ Family focus on sport</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ethnic background <p>★ Potential to promote local identities “trendy” – pride in area</p>	<p>★ Perception of Blacktown</p>

★ Key Issues

Technology

OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ Marketing message can be delivered electronically ★ Branding via a website Packaging <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Smart card technology Immediacy of electronic media Technology levels in area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More technology Maintaining service delivery Technology <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - failure - stalls - up to date Reduces work fast ★ Low rate of internet usage @ home in area Cost of technology for smaller operators

★ Key Issues

Key Issues

Marketplace

- ▶ Blacktown is NSW's third most popular destination by number of visitors (5 million per annum)
- Growth of the area 5000+ net growth per annum
- 400,000 people in 25 years time
- Fastest growing city in Australia
 - ▶ There is a rapidly growing business and industrial community
 - ▶ Increasing numbers of middle to senior level managers are relocating to the area
 - ▶ Increased socio economic profile of the population
 - ▶ Several businesses are already drawing people into the area e.g.
- Westpoint
- Car yards – estimated at 500 families per weekend
- Parklea Markets

Tourism Environment

- ▶ Blacktown is not seen as a tourism destination
- ▶ Low visitation rates by local community reported by major operators
- ▶ Most visitors heading to Wonderland Sydney or Featherdale Wildlife Park are on a set itinerary with no time to stop
- ▶ The Blue Mountains is a day trip so it's difficult to find time to stop
- ▶ A strong VFR market in both Blacktown and surrounding areas

Marketing

- ▶ Poor visibility of Blacktown from major roads
- ▶ Lack of Blacktown signage
- ▶ Lack of directional signage
- ▶ No focus for marketing e.g. Visitor Information Centre

Product

- ▶ Strong range of major attractions
- ▶ Strong range of sporting product
- ▶ Have few areas of natural beauty
- ▶ Less quality heritage buildings than surrounding areas (with the exception of Rouse Hill Estate)
- ▶ No aboriginal product in the area
- ▶ Don't have an entertainment or cultural centre

Infrastructure

- ▶ Volume and quality of restaurants, cafés
- ▶ Food offering is not broad
- ▶ Lack of accommodation combined with volume of accommodation in surrounding areas
- ▶ The M7 Westlink will improve access and egress to the area

Implementation

- ▶ Blacktown City Council is committed to supporting tourism and have demonstrated support with funding and investment in an EDO
- ▶ Motivated tourism network supported by major players in the area

Closure of Wonderland

- ▶ Loss of a major attraction
- ▶ Perception that Wonderlands problems were related to their location
- ▶ Perception that Council did nothing to “save” local tourism land zoning
- ▶ Perception that Council is not committed to tourism as a result of rezoning Wonderland land
- ▶ Wonderland features heavily in Blacktown marketing material

Recommendations

Product Mix, New Product and Product Development

The loss of Wonderland Sydney from the product mix will have an impact on the perception of product range in the marketplace. Even though Wonderland Sydney did not provide significant “flow on” for other tourist attractions or general business in the Blacktown area it is one the best known, easily recalled attractions. Wonderland Sydney also supported the family and fun positioning for the area.

The loss of Wonderland Sydney weakens the product mix in the area. Keeping in mind the need to create a cohesive “promise” and experience that is unique to Blacktown there is one product category that currently has the width and depth to become a point of difference for Blacktown in the short to medium term.

Currently, the product category with the most potential for development is the Sporting product. This fits very well with the “outdoor adventure” sporting product offered in the Penrith area and the concentrated number of sporting venues at Sydney Olympic Park at Homebush. This product development strategy also aligns with Council objectives to become a regional centre of sporting excellence attracting major AFL and cricket teams to the area with stadium facilities.

Sporting product and events are relatively easy to market to the local area. They can also be easily promoted to visitors from surrounding areas through Parklea Markets, car yards and other attractions. Sporting events and products are well suited for publicity opportunities and participation in Tourism Sydney promotions which will increase overall awareness of the area.

A Sporting product mix will also create excellent opportunities for cross-promotion of other sporting events and attractions in the area such as Featherdale Wildlife Park, Rouse House, Parklea Markets, hotels and restaurants.

New and planned products include Drag Racing strip and a possible Surf Park along with the Colebee release area Medallist Golf Development which is backed by Greg Norman. In addition to sporting venues there are also a number of planned high profile events that add to the sporting promise including a major marathon and Australia Day “gift” event.

Key product development strategies include:

- ▶ Active marketing by the EDO to source and attract new sports-based attractions to the area
- ▶ Ensuring availability of land and a Council friendly approach to new sporting venues and attractions
- ▶ Employment of a tourism and sporting coordinator to gather and collate information from the Blacktown tourism and sporting community. This coordinator would also implement the marketing strategies for both the area in general and sporting product
- ▶ Council promotion and sponsorship of sporting clinics and workshops
- ▶ Opportunities to link the business and industrial community to the tourism and sporting community with sponsorships of events and festivals

- ▶ Development of a schools program
- ▶ Participation in Tourism Sydney campaigns such as Easter in Sydney with individual and groups of sporting products

It is important to note that existing attractions should not be ignored in the rush to develop the sporting product mix. Featherdale Wildlife Park, Rouse Hill Estate, Parklea Markets and Eastern Creek Raceway will remain as the “icons” for the area and should be actively promoted as a part of Blacktown’s overall positioning.

Cultural and Heritage Product

It should be noted that there is excellent potential to consolidate and build on this product category in the medium to long term. There are a small number of excellent products in this category including Rouse Hill House, Blacktown Art Gallery and a number of heritage buildings including St Bartholomew’s. Grantham Estate and other properties will become available for development in the near future. Negotiations with the aboriginal community concerning an Aboriginal Cultural Centre are also progressing.

The aim should be to develop a small range of heritage and cultural products that are open consistently and can be positioned along side existing product e.g. via a heritage trail. Developing this category and improving the mix will make it easier to include these products in future general marketing.

Visibility and Awareness

Visitor Information Centre

Blacktown needs to overcome negative perception and become “visible” as a tourism option. The most obvious and logical way to do this is through a Visitor Information Centre. A Tourism NSW study in 1997 identified “that because of information obtained at VIC’s 8.3% of visitors to Sydney’s West stayed additional nights, 11.9% took additional tours and 47.6% visited additional attractions. In general terms 30% knew of the VIC beforehand and 46% noticed the VIC whilst on the trip. The rate of visitation increased with the distance from the central business district and away from the coast generally.”

In Blacktown’s case a VIC will immediately tell the hundreds of thousands of motorists who bypass the area on their way to the Blue Mountains or Hawkesbury that Blacktown is serious about tourism. High traffic, high visibility locations are a key issue for VIC’s. Options for Blacktown would include:

- ▶ A kiosk or mini VIC at the service centre on the M4. This could be undertaken as a joint project with Penrith City Council
- ▶ At a high visibility location on the M7 Westlink
- ▶ In Westpoint or in the old school as a part of the Westpoint food precinct.
- ▶ A VIC on Windsor Road in the old Rouse Hill School on land to be freed up as a part of the redevelopment of the Windsor Road joint venture with Baulkham Hills Shire Council
- ▶ It may also be possible to have a number of mini sites consisting of maps and brochures similar to the project planned by Baulkham Hills Shire Council. These have been launched recently and progress should be monitored

An ideal option would be to have a high traffic site such as a kiosk at the M4 service centre along with a full service VIC at Westpoint or the old school which is well located for the local market.

Website

The Internet is powerful way of visitors sourcing information about Blacktown. A purpose built website for Tourism Blacktown should be an integral part of the short to medium term tourism strategy. This website would become the online version of the Visitor Information Centre featuring attractions, products from all categories including food, calendar of events, promotional offers and contact details for organisers. Long term this could include a booking function which has potential to raise revenue for the VIC. If funding cannot be found for a dedicated website the existing material on the Council website could possibly be upgraded and given a more “commercial” feel. The website should also provide PDF versions of all marketing material produced by the Tourism Network.

Signage

Another very effective way of increasing visibility is through signage. Options for Blacktown include:

- ▶ 3 – 4 tourist focused billboards on Council land facing major thoroughfares. These should be very simple and promote a mix of product
- ▶ Lobbying RTA for improved signage along M4. This could be a joint project with Penrith City Council
- ▶ Adding a “board” to existing Blacktown border signs which can be used to promote nearby attractions e.g. Rouse Hill Park promoted on border sign at Schofields Road
- These boards would promote major attractions and carry the tourism branding
- ▶ A series of 3 -4 tourism/sports themed flags could also be used to promote tourism on the Councils existing 100 poles when they are not being used for other events or programs
- These flags would promote different aspects of tourism and carry the tourism branding
- ▶ It is unreasonable to expect existing operators to change the promotion of their location from a local suburb to Blacktown but it may be possible to brand them as Blacktown businesses by providing them with a sign or sticker carrying the Blacktown branding that can be used in conjunction with their own signage

Marketing Collateral

- ▶ Blacktown needs a publication that can be widely distributed through existing outlets; surrounding VIC’s and at relevant trade shows
- In the medium term (2 – 3 years) Blacktown should aim to produce its own area guide. This would be predominantly funded by operator advertising and should be similar in quality to the Penrith Valley Experience booklet
- In the short term, whilst product is still being developed, this can be cost effectively achieved with a supplement in the Discover Greater Sydney Guide. Run-ons can then be used as a brochure in the short term

Branding

The Blacktown Tourism Network has selected a logo and positioning statement that reflect the attitudes and attributes of the area.

Aim

To design a simple eye catching logo that reflects the Blacktown area. The use of colour, imagery and strong typography help to create an effective eye catching logo that can be used in both the corporate and public arena.

Logo Rational

When designing the Blacktown Tourism Logo Grafmex had to take into account many factors that applied to the Blacktown surrounds and its people.

Logo Elements:

Environmental elements such as the green slash (symbolises the rolling green landscape), the gold circle behind the figure (symbolises the western sun) and the blue and gold typography (symbolises the western sunset) The fun and relaxed human figure symbolises the many different sides of the Blacktown community. Sport (a large factor), families and of course business are portrayed with a free-flowing character that can be used in a cross section of marketing and promotional material.

Typography:

The "Blacktown" typeface gives the logo a strong and united sense. The "good sports... great fun" typeface has a relaxed, flowing feeling. Utilising both these fonts enables the logo to portray a strong yet relaxed presence.

Logo Application:

When designing the Blacktown Tourism Logo Grafmex kept in mind its use for future marketing material. The logo was constructed so Blacktown Tourism could utilise different elements e.g. the free-flowing human figure. The idea would be for these different elements to be used in a consistent manner throughout any future marketing and promotional material. Our aim would be for the community to readily recognise these elements.

Brand Driver

The selected Brand Driver or positioning statement aims to increase local pride in the area and create a specific positioning for local tourist attractions. The term "good sports" not only reflects the strong sport mix in the area but also highlights the attitudes and attributes of the local community. Good fun immediately positions Blacktown as a family market. Together there is a sense of energy, welcoming and good humour in the brand driver.

In keeping with recommended strategies future branding should maintain the Market positioning as friendly, family focused area

- ▶ Major messages include Sport, Family and Fun
- ▶ There will need to be consistency in use of branding, fonts and language
- ▶ All current marketing material should be reviewed and all reference to Wonderland, including "roller coaster" visuals should be replaced
- ▶ There is potential to supplement the branding using "faces of Blacktown" in marketing e.g. sports people or well known achievers. Ideally these people would also have family appeal.
- ▶ There should be consistent promotion of the Blacktown "Icons" such as Featherdale Wildlife Park, Eastern Creek Raceway, Rooty Hill RSL etc

Target Markets

Local Market

Envirometrics research has shown that 33% of leisure visitors come from the Blacktown LGA. In the short term (1 – 3 years) Blacktown Tourism Network should focus on educating the local market and encouraging locals to spend more on tourism product in their area. An overlay of this strategy is to also promote local activities and events for the VFR market.

Strategies for reaching this market include:

- ▶ Development of a series of “Things to do and see flyers” which can be mailed to householders in the area every six months. These flyers would be themed and each would include a number of activities or experiences relevant to the target group. Samples themes include:
 - Wet weekend with the kids
 - Country folk coming to the big smoke
 - Sports – participation
 - Sports - spectator
 - Interstate relatives check us out
 - 10 great things to do with grandparents
 - Quality time with the family
 - Mother-in-Law is flying in
 - Reunited with overseas family
 - Get to know your own town
 - Wheelchair friendly tourism options
- ▶ These flyers would include one or two day itineraries offering a range of activities including attractions, retail, food, parks, scenic drive and picnics. These should not be limited to just traditional tourism operators and may include individual retailers such as a gourmet or ethnic food outlets
- ▶ The language and tone of these flyers would be reminiscent of a local sharing secrets about their favourite spots
- ▶ To reach the local market these flyers could also be distributed at the Westpoint shopping centre information desk or at car yards in the area
- ▶ To reach the visitor market these flyers could also be distributed through tourism operators, accommodation providers, Parklea Markets or at car yards in the area
- ▶ A Visitor Information Centre in the Westpoint centre or adjacent to the eating precinct could become the focus for local promotion
- ▶ Investigate the feasibility of holding a Weekend Tourism Expo at Parklea Markets or Westpoint to promote the range of product to locals. This could be combined with visits from local sports identities
- ▶ Network members could promote specifically to the VFR market with “mates rates” or “good neighbour bonuses” for Blacktown Council residents who bring their visitors along to local attractions. This reward could be a discounted entry fee, small giveaway or free cup of coffee claimable on presentation of their drivers license or ID showing their address

Sports Tourism

Operators in this category each have their own specific target markets in local, interstate and international markets. Most of these operators already conduct successful marketing campaigns. The Network has already given these operators an opportunity to network and exchange information. Most have enthusiastically grasped the opportunity and are already working together. The Network should aim to support their existing efforts and offer opportunities to promote the overall range of sporting attractions and events. Strategies for this market include:

- ▶ Conduct informal research into the needs and wants of this market
 - This may include infrastructure changes or Council support required for initiatives such as training camps
 - This may lead to the formation of a sports subcommittee of the Network
- ▶ Develop a calendar of trade and promotional events that operators are already attending
- Identify events where the Network could provide additional support
 - ▶ The EDO and tourism and sporting coordinator to provide assistance for operators putting together event submissions
- Develop a high quality information kit on the Blacktown area which can be included in operators submissions
 - ▶ Develop a quarterly sporting calendar
 - ▶ Promote the sporting calendar and individual events to the local market through BCC quarterly mailouts
 - ▶ Promote the sporting calendar on the website
- Investigate potential to encourage web visitors to subscribe to the calendar
 - ▶ Distribute the calendar through Council offices, tourism operators, accommodation providers, Parklea Markets and car yards
 - ▶ Implement a policy of promoting sporting product with accommodation and attractions wherever possible
 - ▶ Cross-promote upcoming sporting events to visitors attending sporting venues and events through the calendar or marketing material produced specifically for the event
 - ▶ Work with Tourism Sydney to identify campaigns such as Easter in Sydney which would be suitable for individual operators or groups of sporting venues
 - ▶ Work with BCC and the business community to establish notable events such as a Motor Sport Week involving Eastern Creek, Drag strip, Car shows and commercial car operators

Business/Conference Tourism

The second key area for proactive marketing is the Business/Conference tourism market. The Greater Sydney, Business Tourism project is already increasing the profile of accommodation and conference providers in this market. There is also an opportunity for Blacktown to establish itself as a niche provider in the middle management and industrial markets. The main focus of this market should be the existing industrial and commercial market in the Blacktown area. In addition to facilities for management meetings or product launches many of these companies are looking for venues and catering appropriate for middle management, workshop or technical staff and clients. Strategies for reaching and engaging this market include:

- ▶ Compile a Directory of all conference facility providers and accommodation providers for this market. This directory should be

sent to all businesses in the area with a covering letter from the Tourism Coordinator

- ▶ The Directory can also cross-promote key attractions in the area
 - ▶ The Directory should be sent to all new companies relocating to the area
 - ▶ The Directory can be also made available through Tourism Network operators, BASI and business groups
 - ▶ Conduct a series of famils for PA's and PCO's (Professional Conference Organisers) from major companies in the area. This can be promoted with a direct mailer to specific areas such a Huntingwood. Ideally, a database should be developed by the Tourism Coordinator as a part of this strategy
 - ▶ If time does not permit individual famils, consider a local trade show or event to showcase conference and meeting facilities to PA's, PCO's and marketing managers in the area
 - ▶ Business/conference tourism should be allocated space on the website and the directory available as a PDF download
 - ▶ As awareness of Blacktown improves in this market, tourism and sporting coordinator or Economic Development Manager could attend appropriate business tradeshows with and on behalf of service providers. As awareness of Blacktown improves in this market direct marketing could be undertaken in other metropolitan areas with similar industrial profiles such as Ingleburn
 - ▶ Due to Blacktown City Council's success attracting major industries to the area there may also be potential to attract study tours to the area
- Develop two or three themed itineraries focused on specific industries e.g. warehousing, and promote through DSRD programs

Recreational Tourism

Envirometrics research has shown that 33% of Sydney based visitors to Blacktown come from the local LGA. Other important sources of visitors include:

- ▶ Parramatta 12%
- ▶ Bankstown 9%
- ▶ Baulkham Hills 7%
- ▶ Penrith 5%
- ▶ Hawkesbury 3%
- ▶ Liverpool 3%
- ▶ Sutherland 3%
- ▶ Campbelltown 3%
- ▶ Holroyd 3%

Marketing to these areas will tend to be opportunistic and can include

- ▶ Placement of Discover Greater Sydney supplement in local VIC's
- ▶ Famils for VIC staff in target areas
- ▶ Promotion of events through PR in local papers. This will depend on the readership of local papers
- ▶ Promotion of the area through press releases to metro press. Emphasis on Sunday papers, Saturday supplements such as SMH 48 hours
- ▶ Tourism Expo at Parklea Markets to reach the wider metropolitan area

Promotional Strategies

In addition to target marketing the Network can focus on maximising revenue from existing residents and current visitors

Increase number of visits

- ▶ Distribution of "Things to do and see" flyers through BCC mailings
- It may be possible to supplement this with a small column in the local paper or community service advertising on radio stations targeting Sydney's West
- ▶ Conduct a "Good neighbour" promotion rewarding locals for bringing the VFR market to local operators
- This can be launched through the local press for maximum impact
- ▶ Develop a template for a local "Frequent flyer" card. These can be used by individual operators or groups of operators. (The most common example is the coffee club card which rewards the user with a free cup of coffee for every five purchased)
- ▶ Conduct famils for VIC staff in surrounding areas which aims to increase the amount of referral. Famils would include food and accommodation venues as well as major attractions

Increase average spend

- ▶ Develop packages around major events. Typically these would include entrance to the event, accommodation and meals. Depending on length of the event, entrance to other attractions could be bundled into the package
- A postcard shell could be developed for this promotion and made available to groups of Network operators
- Develop packages with value add rather than discount benefits. Postcard flyers can be distributed at major community events or through car dealers in the area
- ▶ Include product pricing and price ranges on the website and other marketing material where possible. This enables visitors to "upgrade" their purchase with a minimum of effort
- ▶ Develop a "things to do and see" leaflet specifically for the "passing through" traveller or business traveller. These could be distributed through accommodation providers
- ▶ Allow VIC staff to recommend properties appropriate to visitor needs
- ▶ Marketing material to cross promote a range of products to encourage multiple purchases
- ▶ Cross promotion through existing venues and events
- ▶ Develop a compendium package for all accommodation providers in the area. This would consist of existing material such as Things to do and see leaflets, Discover Greater Sydney Supplement and sporting calendar

Blacktown Tourism Network

Structure

It is recommended that the structure of the Blacktown Tourism Network remains the same to allow members to capitalise on their success to date.

As the Network was primarily established to develop, market and promote tourism in the Blacktown area it will not be engaging in direct commercial activities. There would therefore be no obvious benefits from incorporating the Network or creating a hierarchy of office bearers, in fact this could inhibit the progress of the group.

Ideally, the Network should remain an initiative of the Blacktown City Council for the next five years. This close association has already demonstrated to the operators that council is committed to tourism and will allow for an easy flow of information between the council and the local tourism industry. The council is also ideally placed to link new and existing tourism operators to the network.

In the short term it will be critical that the Network and Council work together to develop product and promote the branding of the area.

The informal nature of the Network also allows it to align itself with other organisations in the area such as BASI.

Membership

To date the Economic Development Manager has taken responsibility for introducing new members to the network. In recent months more members are referring colleagues, which is encouraging. Recruitment of members would become a responsibility of the tourism and sporting coordinator. It is recommended that restaurant owners and key operators in the food sector be invited to join the network as they are an important part of the tourism product mix.

Staffing

It has already been identified that the majority of Network members are enthusiastic about contributing to the development of strategies for the area but do not have the time available to implement or administrate initiatives.

It is vital that a full time coordinator be appointed to administer the Network and implement initiatives. It is envisioned that this position will be funded by the Blacktown City Council as a part of their commitment to tourism. The position would report to the Economic Development Officer and may be called a "Tourism and Sporting Coordinator" to reflect the focus on sporting product.

Networking

One of the important benefits of the Network is the chance it gives operators to share information. It is recommended that networking remain a prominent part of regular meetings. The current practice of a member hosting a meeting at their premises should be encouraged. In fact, this should be expanded to include a mini faml at the end of the meeting. This will help educate operators about other product in the area.

Funding

- ▶ Core marketing material such as a general brochure or website could be funded by the Council or sponsored by a number of the larger Network operators. If sponsorship is to be a viable option there could need to be quantifiable benefits for the contributors
- ▶ The Network should investigate available funding from the DSRD for phase two of this project
- ▶ Initiatives of the Blacktown Tourism would be funded on a user pays basis. This would mean that individual operators pay for participation in trade shows, advertising in guides or inclusion on web or email marketing

- ▶ A typical strategy for raising funds is to establish a membership fee to join the network. There are 73 businesses currently listed on the Network database. If the membership was comparable to other business associations at \$150 per annum this would only generate a maximum of \$10,950 per annum. This membership fee would also take time to administrate and could discourage some smaller operators from joining

Implementation

Developing a tourism strategy along with logo and positioning statements is just the start for Blacktown. The next step is to promote the new image and marketing initiatives.

- ▶ Initial marketing efforts should be focused on the local tourism community who will need to understand the rationale behind recommendations. It is anticipated that this plan will be released to the Network operators at a scheduled Network meeting in late March 2004
- ▶ The public launch should take place at a time which ensures maximum attendance. Realistically this means after Easter 2004. This launch should be hosted by the BCC and include key stakeholders such as Network members and the DSRD who funded 75% of this project
 - Local press should be invited to ensure coverage that will reach the community at large
 - It is important that this launch is not seen as a knee jerk reaction to the closure of Wonderland Sydney. A PR strategy should be developed to ensure positive coverage of the tourism
 - Because of the sports emphasis on this tourism strategy it may be appropriate to combine the launch with another announcement that is sports related
 - It may be appropriate to invite a keynote speaker to attract media attention. This could be a sports person who is one of the “faces of Blacktown”
- ▶ Following the launch it is important that members of the Tourism Network and general community see an initiative materialise within 4 - 6 weeks. Depending on budget and timing this could be:
 - Announcement of the recruitment of the tourism and sporting coordinator
 - The first of the “Things to do and see” flyers sent out with Council notices
 - Promotional flags throughout Blacktown
 - Publication of the supplement in Discover Greater Sydney
- ▶ A calendar of tourism strategy implementation should be developed by the tourism and sporting coordinator

Skills Development

Once there is an increased focus on tourism in the Blacktown area locals and visitors will have higher expectations when it comes to the quality of products and customer service. Although many of the larger operators will have staff training programs in place, The Network may be able to assist with some training programs. Where possible the training should be specific to tourism businesses. Training programs could include

- ▶ Customer service: this type of training can be delivered by a local organisation such as BASI
- ▶ Barista training: Visitors (and locals) take their coffee seriously. Most of the major coffee suppliers such as Lavazza provide Barista training for their clients at a nominal fee. There are also Barista trainers who will conduct workshops for operators from a specific area
- ▶ Tourism NSW and Tourism Sydney occasionally run workshop programs specifically for operators

The area would also benefit from a visit by a food consultant who could advise operators on developing product for the tourism market as well as run workshops