Minutes of the Tourist Attraction Signposting Assessment Committee

Wednesday 15 March 2017 at the offices of RMS
Level 3, 27-31 Argyle Street Parramatta

Members
David Douglas  Regional Coordinator TASAC and Drive, Destination NSW
Phil Oliver  Guidance and Delineation Manager, Roads & Maritime Services (RMS)
Maria Zannetides  TASAC Secretariat

Also present
Kerry Cooper  Interpretation Senior Project Officer, NPWS
Amgad Botros  CEO Skypeak Adventures

Apologies
John Rozos  RMS Sydney Region
Wendy Dollin  Tourism Development & Events Coordinator, Blue Mountains City Council

AGENDA ITEMS

1. DELEGATIONS / PRESENTATIONS & REGIONAL SIGNPOSTING ISSUES

1.1 Closure signs on RMS roads during major incidents in National Parks

Kerry spoke to her discussion paper about the potential to add “Park Closed” signs to existing tourist signs for national parks and other conservation reserves managed by NPWS during major incidents or events such as bushfire, flooding and pest control and emphasised the following points:

a. The Office of Environment and Heritage, within which NPWS operates, has a legal duty to address the safety of people in parks and this extends to appropriately managing the risk to visitors.

b. NPWS manages some 880 parks across NSW. Between September 2014 and February 2017, 356 full “park closure” events occurred; 126 parks were affected by one or more “park closure” events; and there was a cumulative duration of 3,653 days of closure for all parks.

c. Park closure events can include instances where a road into a park is closed but the park or sections of it remain open (this would require a “Road Closed” sign instead of a “Park Closed” sign); a road through a park and the park itself are closed; or a park is closed but the road to or through it is open. A variety of messages should therefore be considered including “Park Closed”, “Road Closed”, “Picnic Area Closed” or “Camping Area Closed” (for convenience these are all referred to as “Park Closed” signs below.)

d. Park closed signs are required on the approaches to parks rather than just at park entries to:

  • Avoid congestion at park entries.
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- Prevent unnecessary travel, sometimes along unsealed or winding roads.
- Prevent motorists unnecessarily contributing to traffic hazards associated with major incidents.
- Ensure that signs are placed at locations where motorists can safely respond to “Park Closed” information, which is not always possible at park entries.

e. The above matters are particularly important to protect the safety of motorists towing trailers or caravans or those driving larger vehicles, such as campervans.

f. Parks do not have access to approved “Park Closed” signs that could be erected on approach roads. A policy and associated procedures need to be developed so that relevant NPWS officers can apply for the installation of “Park Closed” signs.

During the discussion the Committee members acknowledged the need to develop an overarching strategy for this type of signage and offered the following specific comments:

i. A broader signage policy would need to be supported by a communications strategy.

ii. It will be necessary to develop specific protocols for individual parks on a case by case basis. It would therefore be appropriate for NPWS to identify a hierarchy of parks so that protocols could be developed first for parks with the greatest needs.

iii. RMS is responsible for signs on State roads and signs on other roads are the responsibility of local councils. As not all parks are signposted from the State road network, local councils would need to be involved in many instances.

iv. RMS has a Principal Manager of Traffic Operations who leads an incident management team.

v. Occupational health and safety considerations and risk management constraints govern who can install or remove signs on RMS roads.

vi. “Park Closed” signs would not be placed on motorways because motorists travelling at high speeds could not safely respond to them or easily change their direction of travel.

vii. NPWS would need to fund all aspects associated with the manufacture, installation and removal of signage on State roads that are required in connection with park closures.

viii. Engineering manuals that set out sign design standards are not able to encompass every possible option and the fact that they do not currently include designs suitable for park closures does not preclude such signs being developed.

Decision: TASAC supports consideration of the development of a strategy for the use of temporary signage that could be added to existing tourist signposting during major incidents or events that require park closures. The strategy should be jointly developed by RMS and NPWS with input from Destination NSW.

Action: (a) Phil to liaise with RMS’s Principal Manager of Traffic Operations and contact Kerry about the next steps.

(b) David will contact Tourism Victoria to see if it has relevant experience that could be shared.
1.2 Skypeak Adventures, St Marys

Amgad Botros addressed the meeting about the potential for tourist signposting for his business Skypeak Adventures, which is an aerial adventure facility and tree walk adjacent to the St Marys Rugby League Club. The centrepiece of the purpose-built aerial adventure structure and tree walk is a 32m tall, 200 year old and 41 tonne River Red Gum tree. The tree, which was to be removed as part of a VicRoads project, was salvaged from a site near the Calder Highway in Victoria. Amgad showed a video about removal and transport of the tree to the Skypeak site, and he highlighted the following points:

a. The River Red Gum was installed at St Marys in July 2016.

b. Removal, transport and installation of the tree at its new site was a highly complex and impressive engineering project. It is understood that the nature and scale of the undertaking has no precedent in Australia and perhaps the world.

c. The tree was defoliated and its roots and some limbs removed to facilitate transport, relocation and repurposing. It is expected that the tree should survive for 50 years and it is now debarking, which is a natural process that will continue for 12 – 18 months.

d. Skypeak Adventures has received some 20,000 visitors since July 2016. It comprises a free-standing adventure park with a variety of aerial challenges including high ropes, vertical climbs, freefalls and zip lines. Also offered is a 45 minute “Skypeak Tree Walk” in which visitors are able to walk up three levels of steps and suspended walkways (equivalent to approx.7 storeys) to the top of the tree before returning to the ground.

During the discussion the Committee members commented as follows:

i. The aerial adventures component of the facility is regarded as a recreational facility and as such would not be eligible for tourist signposting. While there are instances where TASAC has found some aerial adventure facilities to be eligible for signposting, all such cases have related to aerial experiences in living tree canopies on sites of recognised environmental significance, such as regional parks areas, State Forests etc. As the aerial adventure facility at this location is essentially a man-made recreational facility which is not located in an area with recognised environmental values, it would not quality for tourist signposting in its own right.

ii. For tourist signposting to be considered for the Skypeak Tree Walk, it would be necessary to further develop it as a tourism experience by introducing quality on-site interpretive information to tell the story of repurposing the tree, the engineering aspects associated with its relocation and outlining the nature, environmental values and significance of River Red Gums. Material could also be developed to interpret the views from the top of the tree. The interpretive information could take the form of plaques, storyboards or audio-visual material.

iii. Other requirements for tourist signposting include that prior booking is not necessary for a tourism experience and the experience is promoted via a hardcopy and / or digital, print friendly promotional brochure.

iv. Any tourist signposting would be on and from the Great Western Highway, which is the nearest State road.
v. Amgad was invited to contact Maria after he has acted on the matters at “ii” and “iii” above to discuss which might be the most appropriate category for the lodgement of a signposting application.

2. NEW TOURIST SIGNPOSTING APPLICATIONS

2.1 Grantsies Maze & Fun Park, Foxground (near Kiama)

Grantsies Maze and Fun Park is located directly off the current alignment of the Princes Highway at Foxground and is open Thursday to Tuesday from 9 am to 4 pm (closed Wednesday). The park, which opened in December 2015, does not have any existing tourist signposting.

Upgrade works are currently underway to create a new highway alignment that will open in the next few months. Ryan Whiddon, RMS’s Project/Contract Manager, Foxground and Berry has previously advised TASAC that the current highway will revert to a local road, which has been gazetted as Donovan Road, after the new road opens. The park operator is anticipating the loss of highway frontage for his business and is seeking tourist signposting from the new highway alignment.

The following concerns were noted with respect to the application:

i. Entry sign: A sign at the entry indicates “Open 6 days Closed Wednesday” but does not give the hours. These are marked on a small sign fixed to a kiosk window but as the kiosk is some distance from the road, the information could not be seen from the entry at the property line.

ii. Promotional brochure: The business has a suite of eight brochures, one general and seven others aimed at specific market segments (e.g. school groups, retirees etc.) They all give the street address, phone, fax, email and website details. Most include a locality map and all describe the experience offered. Only one (titled “Grantsies Maze presents small rides for small children at a small price”) gives information about opening days in that it states “Closed on Wednesday”. However, none of the brochures include information about both opening days and hours, as required by the NSW Tourist Signposting Manual.

iii. Visitor numbers: The operator’s response to a question on the application form about visitation statistics for the preceding financial year is not adequate. Rather than providing the requested information he indicates that the park had 3,000 visitors in January 2017 with the majority from the Wollongong and Sutherland areas but that it also receives an unspecified number of visitors from Canberra, Sydney, Melbourne and several overseas countries.

iv. Nature of the attraction: Numerous photos were submitted to show activities at the park including a maze, numerous small rides for young children such as rideable animals like dinosaurs, horses, pandas etc. (similar in style to small coin operated rides found in shopping centres), small merry-go-rounds, swan boats, a rocking chaise, double and four seater bikes, arcade games, putt putt golf and archery. Many of the activities require “human” power to operate them, e.g. children must pedal to move a small vehicle on a fixed track. The Committee questioned whether the nature and range of activities was sufficient to constitute a major tourist attraction in the Theme Parks category.
v. **Park layout**: The layout of the park requires clarification in the form of a plan to show its size and scale and depict the relative locations of the various activities. Information is also required to demonstrate the adequacy of internal wayfinding systems as this is not evident from the material provided.

vi. **Staffing levels and safety**: Information on staffing levels is of interest, particularly as many rides are aimed at small children and some rides (e.g. the swan boats that are a water based activity) may raise safety issues.

vii. **Landscaping and park presentation**: Landscaping in parts of the park appears to be unfinished. Some of the rides are located in unpainted metal sheds with concrete floors, some of which have dark marks on them. The park would benefit from improvements to the appearance of some areas in terms of general presentation and more coherent colour schemes and surface finishes.

Prior to the meeting Maria contacted Carole Johnstone, Kiama Council’s Strategic Tourism and Marketing Manager about the application. Following that discussion Council was asked to provide written advice regarding a number of matters and a response is awaited.

While detailed designs and exact quotations are only prepared if and when an application is found to be eligible for signage, members noted RMS advice that a strategic estimate for the cost of tourist signage on the motorway near Foxground would be in excess of $20,000 and this would be at the applicant’s cost. This high cost is because high speed roads like motorways often have logistical problems with installation and require specially designed structures.

**Action:** Secretariat to inform the applicant that advice has been sought from Council regarding the application and to pass on the concerns outlined above.

### 2.2 Beekeepers Inn, Vittoria

Beekeepers Inn, which is accessed directly from the Mitchell Highway, is open daily from 9 am to 5 pm. The building is listed as an item of local heritage significance in Bathurst Regional Council LEP 2014 under the name “Bee Keepers Inn (formerly Halfway House)”.

It no longer operates as inn (i.e. accommodation is not offered) but there are a number of retail offerings at the premises including a farm shop, café / restaurant, antiques and collectables, gifts, candles, a plant nursery, a function and event centre and a working bee display and honey tasting. The signposting application focuses on the latter aspect as it is the only activity that is relevant to a category in the Tourist Signposting Manual (i.e. Primary and Secondary Industry Attractions).

In addition to the opportunity to safely view a working bee display behind a large glass panel and to taste eight varieties of honey, guided tours (at 11 am and 3 pm) and self-guided tours at any time are offered in relation to honey production.

The following concerns were identified:

i. **Entry sign**: Opening hours / days are displayed on A4 pieces of paper attached with “Blu Tack” to the front and rear doors (the rear door is accessed from the car park). The front door sign is too small to be read from the road and presumably the rear door is not
visible from the road, neither sign is permanent and in these respects they do no not satisfy the eligibility requirements.

ii. Name on any signage: The name requested for signage is “Beekeepers Inn” but this does not clearly describe the nature of the tourism experience at the site and is confusing because inn style accommodation is not available at the premises. A different name appears in the brochure heading (i.e. “Goldfields Apiaries” see below) and a variation of this (“Goldfields Brand Honey”) is used in the body of the brochure. In the circumstances, the requested name is not appropriate for signposting and a different name that relates better to honey production would need to be agreed upon.

iii. Brochure adequacy: Text of a brochure was provided but not a copy of the brochure itself so its format is uncertain. The text gives the opening hours / days, some historical details and information about a restaurant / café, a farm shop and “Goldfield Brands Honey”. It gives phone, fax and email contact details but no street address or locality map. The brochure is headed “Natural Honey Goldfield Apiaries”, which is different from the name used in the text and the one requested for signage (see above). The brochure needs to be amended to include a street address and preferably a locality plan; promote the guided and self-guided tours related to honey production (see below); and ensure that all references to the honey-related tourism experience use a consistent name.

iv. Promotion of guided tours: Tour times at 11 am and 3 pm are not mentioned in the brochure. They are referred to in a sheet of paper attached with “Blu Tack” to an interior window. Better promotion of both guided and self-guided tours is required, including in the brochure and website.

v. Interpretive information: Unfortunately, the images submitted of five framed wall mounted posters are too small for anything but the headings to be legible. Larger images in which the text and photos / graphics can be read would be appreciated. As evidenced by the poster headings, the environmental challenges currently affecting bees worldwide do not appear to be mentioned in the interpretive material, which is unusual, because improving awareness of this issue could benefit the industry by increasing customer awareness of one of its major challenges and advice on this apparent omission would be appreciated.

vi. More information about the self-guided tour experience: Clarification is required about the nature of self-guided tours (i.e. what they entail) and an explanation provided as to how they differ from the twice daily guided tours.

vii. Visitnsw listing: The listing presents the premises as a café / restaurant, activities which are not eligible for signposting, without highlighting the opportunity to learn about honey production. The listing also directs visitors to more information at the website of “bestrestaurants.com.au” thus reinforcing the impression that the business is a café / restaurant and not a tourist attraction within the context of TASAC guidelines. The listing needs to be amended to reflect the tourist experience offered at the site.

By way of comment, it was noted that labels on the honeys offered for tasting give the origins of the honeys but no information about their taste and how this might relate to their origins.

Decision: More information is required to address the matters outlined above in order for the Committee to finalise consideration of the application.

Action: Secretariat to advise the applicant as above.
3. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES OF 8 FEBRUARY 2017

The minutes of TASAC’s meeting of Wednesday 8 February 2017 in Orange were confirmed. The Committee members and Secretariat advised that they had completed all the actions attributed to them from the meeting.

4. MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS

4.1 Foghorn Brewery, Newcastle, additional information

Members considered additional information recently received from the operator of Foghorn Brewery in response to eight matters of concern that had previously been identified. It was agreed that seven of the concerns have now been resolved. However, an issue about the adequacy of entry signage in terms of its permanency, size, visibility and requires further attention.

Currently, opening hours / days are listed on a relatively small piece of paper attached to one of the front windows but this cannot be read by motorists. Related to this are concerns raised previously by Ken Saxby of RMS Hunter Region “that the business is not easily located as it looks no different to many of the surrounding buildings so that tourists following any future road signs may have issues locating it and this matter may need to be resolved with Council”.

The above concerns are exacerbated by the lack of on-site parking in that there is no associated vehicular entry that could be marked by tourist signage to assist motorists to identify the property. The absence of a driveway entry also poses logistical problems for the design and location of tourist signage.

Consequently, to meet TASAC guidelines, the operator needs to revise the sign that gives information about opening hours / days and contact details so that it is presented on a sign that is permanent in nature and of a size and in a position that can be read by passing motorists. To address RMS Hunter’s concerns about the ease of locating the premises, the operator should also review business identification signage in consultation with Council and RMS.

Decision: Entry signage conveying the brewery’s opening hours / days and a contact phone number is not currently adequate and needs to be amended by the applicant and evidence provided to demonstrate that a new treatment meets TASAC eligibility requirements. The applicant also needs to demonstrate that RMS Hunter’s concerns noted above have been resolved.

Action: Secretariat to advise the applicant as above.

4.2 Classic Car Museum, Gosford

On 27 February 2017 the applicant submitted photographic evidence to demonstrate that additional entry signs had been installed at Gates 1, 2 and 3 at the premises as previously requested. This completed the outstanding matters affecting the application. The applicant and RMS were advised on 28 February 2017 that the attraction is eligible for signposting.

Decision: TASAC noted that the Classic Car Museum is eligible for tourist signposting in the Museums category.
4.3 Orange Wine Tourism Region signage scheme

During discussions at the February 2017 meeting members were surprised to learn that 33 wineries are listed on the information bay panels at the entries to the Orange Wine Tourism Region but that only about half of these are included in the regional signage scheme prepared by Marty Cassell of RMS Western Region and which will be implemented later this year. The Secretariat was asked to investigate and report back to the Committee.

Maria consulted with both Marty and Glenn Mickle, Orange City Council’s Tourism Manager, and prepared a report that compares both lists of wineries. Her report, which was circulated to Committee members, Marty and Glenn prior to the meeting, was discussed and the following explanations noted as to why there are more wineries shown on the information panels than in the signage scheme design:

- Some wineries have closed or are known to be relocating.
- Some businesses are located in the Orange town centre; in Millthorpe (Blayney LGA) or Borenore (Cabonne LGA).
- Some wineries already have existing signage on a State road, which will not be affected by the new regional signage scheme (i.e. Highland Heritage Estate and Orange Mountain Wines).

4.4 Lions Lookout, near Young

David Newberry, Manager Communications and Economic Development at Hilltops Council, has advised the Secretariat that Lions Lookout would no longer qualify for tourist signposting. Maria passed this information on to James Gorrie, RMS South West, with a request to remove the existing signposting from the Olympic Highway as soon as possible. James is involved in a project to upgrade a portion of the Olympic Highway that provides access to the lookout. It was also noted that the Council may approach RMS about the potential for the lookout to receive white on blue service signs.

Decision: Lions Lookout is no longer eligible for tourist signage.

Action: RMS South West to remove the existing signage as soon as possible and inform the Secretariat when this has been done.

4.5 Western Plains Riding Centre, Dubbo

Existing tourist signposting for Western Plains Riding Centre near Dubbo is affected by a project to upgrade the Golden Highway. The operator of the business has confirmed that she will not be reapplying for tourist signposting because the business does not meet the eligibility requirements (opening hours / days are less than required and booking is essential). Maria passed this information on to Marty Cassell at RMS Western, who is involved with the upgrade project and asked him to make arrangements to remove the signage. Phil advised that action to achieve this was in progress.

Decision: Western Plains Riding Centre is no longer eligible for tourist signage.
Action: RMS Western to remove the existing signage as soon as possible and inform the Secretariat when this has been done.

Note: On 21 March 2017 Marty advised the Secretariat that the signage had been removed.

4.6 Weddin Mountains National Park, Grenfell

Jo Pedler of NPWS Outback and Riverina Zone contacted Maria about the need to update the eligibility of Weddin Mountains National Park for its existing signage. This is part of a broader review of signage in Grenfell being undertaken in conjunction with Weddin Council and it would be desirable for an application for the park to be submitted as soon as possible because the wider review is proceeding well.

5. INQUIRIES RECEIVED SINCE LAST MEETING

The following inquiries received in the period since the last meeting were noted:

5.1 Cassegrain Wines (AVIC accreditation inquiry)
5.2 Butterfly House, Coffs Harbour
5.3 Lion of Waterloo Pub, Wellington
5.4 Thirsty Crow Brewery, Wagga Wagga (Council)
5.5 Tourist Drive 14, (proposed extension)
5.6 Archer Racecourse, Nowra
5.7 Manilla visitor outlet (Tamworth LGA)
5.8 Warragamba Dam (RMS)
5.9 Hawkins Lookout outlet (The Hills LGA) (RMS)
5.10 Griffith AVIC – additional signage
5.11 Hermit’s Cave, Griffith
5.12 Mann River Nature Reserve, near Glen Innes
5.13 Lombok on Waterfall Retreat, Thora (near Bellingen)
5.14 Historic Berry
5.15 History Catherine Hill Bay (RMS)
5.16 Kew visitor centre (RMS)
5.17 Cattai Wetlands, Coopernook
5.18 Bill the Bastard Statue, Murrumburrah (Council)
5.19 Contentious Character Winery, Wamboin
5.20 Moonbi Lookout, Moonbi (Tamworth LGA) (RMS)
5.21 Slim Dusty Centre, Kempsey (RMS)
5.22 Gratton Gallery Cafe, Wongarbon

In relation to item 5.9 above, John Rozos of RMS Sydney, who is planning road upgrade works along the Northern Road, advised the Secretariat that signage for Hawkins Lookout has become unserviceable. Maria consulted Michael Lathlean, Manager Community Planning and Special Infrastructure at The Hills Council, who subsequently confirmed that Council will not be submitting an application to retain signposting for the lookout.

Decision: Hawkins Lookout is no longer eligible for tourist signage.
Action: RMS Sydney to remove the existing signage as soon as possible and inform the Secretariat when this has been done.

6. POLICY ISSUES

6.1 Proposal by Nambucca Council to extend Tourist Drive 14

A discussion paper submitted by Coral Hutchinson, Nambucca Council’s Manager Community Development, regarding a proposed extension to Tourist Drive 14 was considered and the following points were noted:

a. The existing drive is 28 km long and the proposal envisages a 20.7 km northerly extension.

b. Council’s proposal to extend the drive anticipates the completion of a current project to upgrade the Pacific Highway. The longer drive would make use of Giinagay Way, which will become the new name of the current highway alignment after the new alignment becomes operational.

c. The extended drive would leave the highway at the Stuarts Point interchange in the south (which is the drive’s current southerly point) and proceed along the current route of TD 14 via Stuarts Point and Scotts Head, cross the highway at the Bald Hill interchange, proceed north west to Macksville, then east via Giinagay Way to Nambucca Heads to re-join the highway at the Nambucca Heads interchange in the north.

d. The towns of Macksville and Nambucca Heads are key points of interest along the extended route and part of it would also follow the Nambucca River.

e. The entire route of the proposed drive is sealed and in good condition.

During the discussion the Committee members acknowledged the merits of Council’s proposal but the practical difficulties of designing signage for a drive that crosses the highway at two points were also noted.

Decision: While the Committee has no objection in principle to the proposal to extend Tourist Drive 14, it may be problematic for RMS to design appropriate motorway signs for the extension and it may not be possible to utilise a traditional loop sign design. Therefore, RMS will need to look at options for signposting treatments before a final decision could be made on the proposal.

Action: Secretariat to respond to Council as above and arrange for TASAC to meet in Nambucca LGA in the next few months.

6.2 Update on Kosciuszko National Park signage concept

Phil reported on his recent visit to the Kosciuszko National Park and environs as part of a project to review the park’s signage. The signage, which has not been updated for 20 years, does not reflect current design standards and RMS is preparing a replacement scheme in partnership with NPWS to improve guidance for motorists. NPWS will meet the costs of the new signage.
6.3 RMS wayfinding research

Phil reported on wayfinding research conducted by RMS in so far as it related to tourist drive signage and the following points were noted:

i. Customers acknowledged the ongoing benefit of physical signage infrastructure and confirmed that the need for signage had not been replaced by an increase in the use of digital wayfinding technology such as navigation devices, apps etc.

ii. Customers utilise tourist drive signage and would be even more inclined to do so if information about distances and points of interest was located on drive signage in advance of highway exits. RMS will explore options as to how this might be implemented.

iii. An important benefit of signage is that it assists with the management of driver fatigue.

6.4 Update on signage for Tourist Drive 2 (Mudgee, Rylstone, Kandos, Glen Davis, Capertee)

On 1 March 2017 Kellie Barrow, Lithgow Council’s Tourism Manager, informed Maria that the signs required to complete the upgrade of Tourist Drive 2 on Council’s roads had been installed (signage in Mid Western Council’s area, which shares the drive with Lithgow was completed in July 2016). The drive is promoted in a combined brochure for Tourist Drives 1, 2, 3 and 4 jointly prepared in 2012 by the Councils that share the drives.

Decision: The review of signage and promotional material for Tourist Drive 2 (Mudgee, Rylstone, Kandos, Glen Davis, Capertee) has now been completed

Action: Secretariat to write to both Councils to acknowledge completion of the drive’s review and to request RMS Western to ensure that the drive’s signage at State highway junctions is in good condition.

6.5 Tourist Drive 1 (Hartley-Jenolan Caves-Oberon-Kelso)

It was noted that advice is awaited from Oberon Council regarding a timeframe to revise a promotional brochure for Tourist Drive 1 (please refer to the February 2017 meeting minutes for more details).

7. OTHER BUSINESS

7.1 TASAC Meeting Schedule

The next meeting will be held on Thursday 20 April in Destination NSW’s Sydney office. Please refer to Attachment 1 for the schedule of meetings for the next six months.

The meeting concluded at 2.45 pm
### Attachment 1 – TASAC Meeting Schedule

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<th>Region</th>
<th>Location</th>
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<td>Sydney</td>
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<td>Northern</td>
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